A Labour of Love? Male and Female Partners' Emotion Work in Intimate Relationships

by

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Abstract

Drawing on the relational developmental systems meta-model and a gender relations theoretical perspective, the present study analyzed data from 1,932 heterosexual couples from Waves 1 and 2 of the Germany Family Panel to answer three questions: (1) What are the longitudinal associations between male and female partners' emotion work provision and relationship satisfaction? (2) Do associations among emotion work and relationship satisfaction differ between men and women? (3) Does partners' levels of authenticity moderate associations among these focal variables? An actor-partner interdependence model revealed providing emotion work was linked to positive relationship appraisals in the future for male and female partners, and female partners' emotion work was the strongest predictor of both partners' relationship satisfaction. Latent variable interactions demonstrated male partners' emotion work was linked to female partners' heightened relationship satisfaction only when men also reported high levels of authenticity. Emotion work may be best conceptualized as a "labour of love" that builds future relationship satisfaction while under the differential "management" of authentic self-representation and gender norms of affective care for male and female partners.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Rebecca Horne. No part of this thesis has been previously published. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Family Relations in the German Pairfam Study”, No. Pro00060173, October 11, 2016.

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Forever feeling the love (and studying it),

Rebecca.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

''A marriage does not exist merely because a ceremony has been performed, nor does a family arise merely through the birth of a child—there is work that goes into the achievement and maintenance of both." (Erickson, 1993, p. 890)

Relationship scholars, couples therapists, and lay people in intimate unions frequently endorse the motto "relationships are a lot of work," but the meaning behind this saying is more complex than it appears on the surface. What kind of "work" sustains relationships? Is it always beneficial to put a substantial amount of work into relationships, or is there a time where such effort is no longer sustainable for one's personal or relational well-being? Is the direction or outcome of this work dependent on the couple context itself, such as each partner's attributes? In response to these questions, intimate relationship scholars have recently explored the concept of *emotion work*, which refers to the process of evoking or suppressing one's own emotions to produce a certain outward display (Hochschild, 1979), as well as engaging in supportive behaviours that foster an intimate partner's positive emotions (e.g., listening attentively to a partner's thoughts and feelings, expressing appreciation toward a partner, acknowledging a partner's emotions even if they were not shared; Erickson, 2005).

Although prior research found emotion work was associated with higher relationship satisfaction and stronger commitment for the provider and the recipient (Curran, McDaniel, Pollitt, & Totenhagen, 2015; Minnotte, Pederson, & Mannon, 2010), habitually managing one's emotions to enhance a partner's well-being was also linked to higher relationship conflict and psychological distress, particularly for women (Strazdins & Broom, 2004; Umberson, Thomeer, & Lodge, 2015). Further, the greater discrepancy between emotions *displayed* compared to emotions actually *felt* may prove especially detrimental to personal and relationship well-being

(Hochschild, 1983). In short, the literature lacks consensus about whether emotion work is helpful or harmful for relationship quality, especially over time, and little research has explored how intrapersonal characteristics (e.g., one's ability to stay authentic to the self in the face of influence from others) may shape the nature of this association for men and women.

Accordingly, the present study combines relational developmental systems theory (Lerner, Johnson, & Buckingham, 2015) with a gender relations perspective (Ferree, 2010) and draws on data from 1,932 heterosexual couples who participated in Waves 1 and 2 of German Family Panel (pairfam) study (Brüderl, Hank, et al., 2015) to answer three main questions: (1) What are the longitudinal associations between male and female partners' emotion work provision (e.g., "I listen to my partner and give him/her the chance to express himself/herself") and each partner's relationship satisfaction? (2) Are there gender differences in associations between emotion work provision and relationship satisfaction? (3) Does authenticity (e.g., "I often agree with others, even if I'm not sure" [item is reverse worded to reflect inauthentic behaviours]) moderate associations among these focal variables?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The present study is guided by a combined relational developmental systems (RDS) and gender relations theoretical perspective. The *RDS meta-model* is a broad perspective on human development that frames development as a relational process involving continual, bidirectional transactions between an individual and his or her intrapersonal (e.g., cognitions), interpersonal (e.g., family), and sociocultural (e.g., gender norms) contexts over time (Lerner et al., 2015). Grounded in the worldview of *relationism* and the principle of *holism*, a RDS perspective suggests person and context are "co-equal, indissociable complementarities" (Overton, 2013, p. 98) that mutually constitute one another and evolve together across time. As such, an individual's attributes, behaviours, and developmental trajectory will inevitably shape and be shaped by his or her relational environments over the life course (Lerner, Agans, DeSouza, & Gasca, 2013; Overton, 2013). It is therefore necessary to consider the interplay between personal characteristics and contextual factors to gain a comprehensive understanding of the developing individual (Lerner et al., 2015).

A salient relational environment in the human ecological network that influences individual development is the microsystem, which encompasses one's interpersonal relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Intimate unions are among the most proximal relationships in one's microsystem given the depth and frequency of exchanges between partners and emotionally intimate nature of these ties (Huston, 2000). The interdependence of individuals and their relational contexts, coupled with the particularly strong bond inherent in couple relationships, suggests intimate partners' developmental processes will be intertwined over time. A RDS perspective considers how individuals' psychological traits, relationship cognitions, and

partnership interactions may be influenced by their own experiences, their partners' characteristics, and the multiple contexts in which they are situated (Huston, 2000).

Applied to the present study, a RDS perspective necessitates the use of longitudinal data collected from both partners in an intimate union to explore interrelations among partners' behavioural (emotion work) and cognitive (relationship satisfaction) characteristics over time. This study represents, to my knowledge, the first attempt at investigating emotion work processes in relationships with multiple waves of data, addressing calls for such a study over two decades ago (Erickson, 1993). The coevolution of individual and relational contexts under a RDS framework also leads me to consider *both* partners' emotion work and relationship satisfaction. Indeed, providing emotion work may be a delightful or woeful task that has consequences for one's own relationship satisfaction, but it may also influence how the receiving partner appraises the overall quality of his or her relationship in the future.

This study is also informed by a *gender relations perspective* that, similar to the RDS meta-model, acknowledges social life is shaped by multiple intersecting contexts, but focuses specifically on the salience of gender across micro-, meso-, and macro-environments (Ferree, 2010). The gender relations perspective is grounded in feminist theory and positions gender as a ubiquitous, "socially constructed stratification system" (Risman, 2004, p. 430) that structures individual behaviour, interpersonal relations, and institutional practices based on assumed differences between men and women. Not only is gender reproduced daily through performances of masculinity or femininity in response to normative ideals on what behaviours are appropriate for one's biological sex (West & Zimmerman, 1987), but it also organizes how men and women relate to one another and provides them with differential access to power and resources in certain contexts (Ferree, 2010). A gender relations perspective is particularly attuned to how gendered

behaviours, roles, and relationships are socially constructed to maintain inequalities between men and women (Ferree, 1990).

Given empirical evidence that men and women are generally more similar than different on many psychological and interpersonal qualities (e.g., Carothers & Reis, 2013; Hyde, 2005), the production and exaggeration of behavioural differences based on gender become all the more necessary to sustain relationships of power between men and women (Ferree, 1990). Indeed, as Risman (2004) eloquently stated, "the creation of difference is the very foundation on which inequality rests" (p. 430). In the context of heterosexual intimate relationships, the division of family work (i.e., housework, child care, and emotion work) is one prominent way gender differences are constructed and reproduced, with women performing the bulk of this work (Coltrane, 2000). This uneven division of labour is justified by contradictory constructions of women as nurturing and competent emotional supporters best suited to tasks of relationship maintenance in the private sphere and men as independent, instrumental providers best suited to roles in the public sphere. Women and men may feel compelled to engage in or disengage from family work to uphold these gendered identities (Mannino & Deutsch, 2007), and participating in this type of relationship work may be tied to different—even divergent—relationship satisfaction appraisals.

Applied to the present study, a gender relations perspective requires an examination of emotion work provision on the basis of gender. Given that assumptions of competent and effortless emotional support define the social category of women, both partners may expect and prefer women's emotion work because it provides an avenue for them to appropriately "do their gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987) in their relationships. Stronger associations may, therefore, emerge between women's emotion work provision and *both* partners' relationship satisfaction, as

women's emotion-oriented efforts align with expectations of traditionally feminine behaviour and may be more influential in establishing the overall climate of a relationship. Although men's emotion work performance may still have implications for both partners' relationship satisfaction, this link may be weaker because emotion work is antithetical to traditionally masculine traits (such as independence and limiting emotional expression) and deemed less central to positive relationship functioning. I compare the relative strength of male and female partners' pathways between emotion work and relationship satisfaction to determine whether associations differ based on gender.

Conceptualizing Emotion Work: From Past to Present

The term *emotion work* was originally developed by Hochschild (1979, 1983) to describe the intrapersonal process of altering one's felt emotions to produce a certain bodily display in the private sphere. More recent conceptualizations of emotion work in couple relationships literature take an interpersonal approach, defining it as emotionally supportive behaviours that encourage and preserve positive feelings in an intimate partner (e.g., Erickson, 2005). Emotion work is often used interchangeably with the term *emotion management* and can be subsumed under the broader construct *emotional regulation*, as modifying one's cognitions and internal state to alter an emotion is one of many regulatory strategies for impacting the type, timing, and experience of an emotion (Gross, 2014). Emotion work is also related to (but distinct from) *emotional labour*, which involves managing one's emotions specifically in the workforce to fulfill a company's commercial agenda (Hochschild, 1983).

Abiding by a RDS perspective, a holistic conceptualization of emotion work involves understanding the broader emotional system it operates within (Bahr & Bahr, 2009; Hochschild, 1983), comprised of four interrelated elements: (a) felt emotion and cognitions, (b) feeling rules,

(c) intrapersonal emotion work, and (d) achieved display and interpersonal emotion work. I provide a conceptual schematic of the broader emotion work process in Figure 1.

Felt emotion and cognitions. Emotions are transient affective and bodily experiences that spontaneously arise in situations of personal importance that help us appraise and respond to such events (Bahr & Bahr, 2009; Gross, 2014). Emotions have many adaptive features for the individual, one of which is "to establish our position vis-à-vis our environment, pulling us toward certain people, objects, actions and ideas, and pushing us away from others" (Levenson, 1994, p. 123). Emotions play a particularly strong role in pulling us toward individuals who could be compatible intimate partners, and mutually experienced positive emotions that build favorable relationship cognitions (e.g., satisfaction) are important for overall intimate union formation and maintenance. For example, being in an intimate relationship tends to expand the breadth and depth of our emotional repertoires in ways that are intrinsically rewarding (Bradbury & Karney, 2014), and partners' reciprocal disclosures of emotion-based experiences are linked to the development of relationship intimacy when met with understanding, validating, and caring responses (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Overall, relationship satisfaction and stability are robustly associated with partners' abilities to be emotionally transparent in their unions, as well as with their capacities to be aware of and receptive to each other's emotional states (Fitness, 2001). It is important to note that even though emotions and satisfaction are closely linked in intimate relationships and subsumed under the broader construct of subjective well-being, the emotions partners experience and attempt to regulate in their unions (an affectual process) are conceptually and empirically distinct from partners' subsequent appraisals of general relationship satisfaction (a cognitive process; see Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Lucas, Diener, & Suh, 1996).

Feeling rules. Although emotions arise impromptu, it may not be beneficial to express all

emotions in equally instantaneous, unfiltered ways. Indeed, people may be better able to meet individual or relational goals if they are able to regulate their emotions in certain situations (Gross, 2014). In his seminal work on impression management, Goffman (1959) argued that we regulate our behaviour in interactions with others to match social conventions surrounding the exchange and to influence other people's perceptions of us, even though this display may be at odds with our felt emotions. How, then, do social conventions and interpersonal forces guide our emotional expressions? Drawing on Goffman's work, Hochschild (1979) proposed each culture has normative "feeling rules" (p. 563) that demarcate the type, intensity, and duration of feeling that is appropriate to display in a given scenario, which will impact the form and extent of emotion work an individual performs on themselves or for others. We become aware of feeling rules through cultural knowledge, how others respond to our expressed emotions, and how we evaluate our own felt emotions. A wedding is an example of a situation accompanied by strong feeling rules, as guests are expected to display a joyous demeanour throughout the event regardless of their actual feelings (Hochschild, 1983). The various roles we inhabit also possess feeling rules. For instance, gender norms make it more acceptable for a bride to be overemotional compared to a groom, while occupational norms make it less acceptable if the wedding officiant exhibits similar emotions during the ceremony. Hochschild (1983) argued that feeling rules are less apparent, but nonetheless present, in the *everyday lives* of intimate partners, where they subtly guide emotional expression in ways that best sustain relational ties.

Intrapersonal emotion work. If an individual experiences a mismatch between his or her felt emotions and the suitable emotion a situation or role calls for, how is congruence reached? Emotion work is employed precisely in these scenarios, where an individual tries to alter a genuine emotion to reduce the "emotive dissonance" (Hochschild, 1979, p. 565) between

what one *does* feel and what one *ought* to or *wants* to feel. Hochschild (1983) also argued that intimate relationships demand some of the most substantial emotion work given the salience of these bonds for one's well-being. A university student may try to focus on the negative qualities of his classmate who just wants to be friends to stifle his attraction toward the classmate. A woman may take deep breaths and try to suppress her fidgeting to lessen her nervousness on a first date. A husband may try to smile around his wife who was unfaithful to convince himself that he is still happy in the marriage. These examples of trying to suppress or evoke an inner emotion align with three different techniques of emotion management, respectively: adjusting one's cognitions, physiological and bodily responses, or "expressive gestures" (Hochschild, 1979, p. 562) in order to change the emotion associated with them. Importantly, the end goal of emotion work is not merely changing the appearance or expression of an emotion, but changing the actual emotion that gave rise to certain displays in the first place. Overall, because this emotion management process is directed toward one's own feelings, behaviours, and thoughts, I refer to it as *self-oriented* or *intrapersonal emotion work*.

Achieved display and interpersonal emotion work. Although Hochschild (1979) focused primarily on self-oriented emotion work strategies and the effort (rather than outcome) of altering a feeling, she acknowledged "emotion work can be done by the self upon the self, *by the self upon others, and by others upon oneself* [emphasis added]" (p. 562). Thus, while intrapersonal emotion work is directed at modifying one's felt emotion to achieve a certain bodily display, this display can then be directed toward another individual (e.g., an intimate partner) in the form of what I refer to as *other-oriented* or *interpersonal emotion work*. One's achieved display is therefore not only a product of their intrapersonal emotion management, but may also be a sign of an interpersonal emotion work process underway. More recent scholarship

on emotion work has addressed this latter form of emotion management, with attention shifting in the past couple of decades "from the gap between felt emotion and achieved display to that separating intention and empathy, or intention and desired change in another person" (Bahr & Bahr, 2009, p. 226). In the context of intimate relationships, interpersonal emotion work is akin to engaging in supportive behaviours that promote an intimate partners' emotional well-being (Erickson, 1993, 2005; Strazdins, 2000). Some examples of interpersonal emotion work include validating a partner's feelings, utilizing active listening skills, expressing appreciation and encouragement, bringing a partner out of a bad mood, and initiating discussions of sensitive topics.

In summary, my conceptualization of emotion work bridges past and present definitions of emotion management by considering how it is performed on both intrapersonal and interpersonal levels. The emotional system originally proposed by Hochschild (1983) and later expanded on by intimate relationship scholars (e.g., Erickson, 1993) suggests individuals have emotional experiences they are inclined to share (felt emotions) regulated by their own levels of satisfaction (cognition) and sociocultural conventions on how one should feel in certain situations (feeling rules). Individuals must modify their own emotions to ensure they align with what a situation or role calls for (intrapersonal emotion work), resulting in an observable expression of a managed emotion (achieved display). In the context of intimate relationships, one's achieved display involves engaging in behaviours that foster the positive emotions of a partner (interpersonal emotion work). As indicated by the feedback loops in Figure 1, providing emotion work for a partner and receiving emotion work from a partner generates emotional experiences and cognitions for each individual, setting the stage for future feeling rules, intrapersonal emotion work, and interpersonal emotion work to unfold.

Emotion Work, Relationship Quality, and Gender

Most research on emotion work in intimate unions has explored whether this process is beneficial or detrimental for relationship functioning and examined potential gender differences in the emotion work-relationship quality link. Moreover, while most studies have aligned their conceptualizations of emotion work with Erickson's (1993) pioneering study—defining it as "the enhancement of others' emotional well-being and the provision of emotional support" (p. 888)—they utilize varying operationalizations of the construct, which will be noted throughout this review where necessary. Several studies documented the benefits of emotion work for one's relationship well-being by drawing on individual and dyadic data, as well as self-reports and cross-partner reports, leading some to conclude "the more emotion work performed, the better" (Erickson, 1993, p. 896). Erickson (1993) analyzed cross-sectional survey data from 205 married women and found both spouses' emotion work provision (e.g., sharing thoughts and feelings with a partner, expressing concern for a partner's well-being) was positively associated with women's marital stability and satisfaction and negatively associated with their marital burnout. Similarly, Wilcox and Nock (2006) asked women about their perceptions of their husbands' emotion work (operationalized as displays of affection and understanding) and their own marital satisfaction and found men's emotion work was the strongest predictor of women's marital happiness compared to several other variables predictive of marital quality (e.g., housework patterns, having children, perceptions of fairness in the relationship). Although these studies focused exclusively on women's perceptions of emotion work and relationship quality rather than perceptions of both partners in the union, they nevertheless suggest women's relationship satisfaction may be bolstered in marital contexts characterized by support and care from emotionally attentive partners.

Other scholars have included both partners of an intimate relationship in their studies, but focused on each partner's self-reported performance of emotion work and relationship well-being. In a sample of 63 heterosexual partners seeking marital therapy, Holm, Werner-Wilson, Cook, and Berger (2001) found men and women were most satisfied with their relationship when they reported providing similar levels of emotion work (e.g., attempting to relieve a partner of his or her negative mood). Performing emotion work was also associated with higher daily reports of relationship satisfaction, love, commitment, and closeness for men and women in dating, cohabiting, and married heterosexual relationships in a week-long daily diary study that utilized Erickson's original emotion work items (Curran et al., 2015). These findings have been corroborated by various studies drawing on data from a family and work study in the western United States that assessed cross-partner reports of emotion work performance (items inquired about self-disclosure, reducing negative moods, expressing praise, providing solutions, initiating problem talks, and sensing a partner's distress) and relationship outcomes. For example, Stevens, Minnotte, Mannon, and Kiger (2006) examined husbands' and wives' reports of their partners' emotion work and found that even when other family work roles (i.e., housework and child care) were performed unequally, perceptions of high emotion work from a partner was associated with satisfaction in their family work arrangement. Furthermore, receiving emotion work from a partner was associated with higher marital satisfaction and lower marital burnout for men and women (Minnotte et al., 2010; Pederson, Minnotte, Mannon, & Kiger, 2011). Although these studies suggest *receiving* emotion work has similar implications for men's and women's relationship quality, findings are mixed on whether there are gender differences in *providing* emotion work: while Minnotte et al. (2010) found emotion work performance was positively linked to men and women's self-reported marital satisfaction, Pederson et al. (2011) only found

this association for women. These studies suggest receiving emotion work from a partner is linked to reporting more satisfying relationships, and providing emotion work for a partner is also associated with enhanced marital well-being, particularly for women.

Although many studies find positive associations between emotion work and relationship quality, other research suggests emotion work is not always constructive for intimate union health. On the one hand, Curran and colleagues (2015) found *receiving* substantial amounts of emotion work from a partner had differing impacts on men and women's relationship perceptions: while women with partners who provided frequent emotion work had more stability in their daily reports of love, satisfaction, and closeness, men with partners who provided frequent emotion work had more fluctuating daily scores on measures of love and commitment. Curran et al. (2015) suggested men may feel threatened by their partners' relational power manifested in their strong provisions of emotion work because it contradicts patriarchal social norms that expect men to hold more power than women overall, thereby reducing their relationship quality. These findings demonstrate how the link between emotion work and relationship quality may operate in different directions on the basis of gender.

On the other hand, *providing* strong emotion work for a partner may also be tied to poorer personal and relationship well-being, especially if it is not fairly reciprocated in an intimate union. According to a mixed-method study of 102 couples raising young children, inequitable provisions of emotion work (operationalized as understanding affectual needs, providing emotional and instrumental support, and working to improve one's relationship) were tied to negative psychological outcomes for women (Strazdins & Broom, 2004). Specifically, when women reported doing more emotion work for their partners than they were receiving, they also reported feeling less loved by their partners and experienced higher levels of marital

conflict. Experiences of marital distress, in turn, were associated with more depressive symptoms in women (Strazdins & Broom, 2004). In a qualitative study comparing the emotion work experiences of lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples, Umberson et al. (2015) found heterosexual couples experienced more conflict around the performance of emotion work compared to same-sex couples, and heterosexual women, in particular, endured more stress from extensive emotion work efforts in their unions. Despite potential gender differences in emotion work provision and associated feelings of distress, couples tend to justify emotion work imbalances by describing women as naturally better at providing emotional support and men as poorly attuned to their spouses' emotional needs and more adept at instrumental aid (Thomeer, Reczek, & Umberson, 2015). In line with Hochschild's (1979) discussion of how feeling rules dictate appropriate emotional expression, these studies suggest emotion work may be regulated by gender norms that specify who should (and who should not) provide emotion-based support in intimate unions, which may have differential consequences for men and women's personal and relational well-being.

Taken together, the literature on emotion work, relationship satisfaction, and gender reveals inconsistent findings, necessitating further exploration into associations between these constructs. With the exception of Curran et al.'s (2015) seven-day study, the aforementioned studies on emotion work in relationships also all have cross-sectional designs, which preclude their ability to specify the direction of these associations. I use both partners' reports of their emotion work provision and relationship satisfaction at two different time points to address these limitations in the extant literature, testing for actor (e.g., intrapersonal) and partner (e.g., interpersonal) effects in how these variables are connected over a one-year time span.

Authenticity as a Potential Moderator

"In the theatre, the illusion dies when the curtain falls, as the audience knew it would. In private life, its consequences are unpredictable and possible fateful." (Hochschild, 1983, p. 48)

Extant research suggests emotion work is linked to positive relationship outcomes in some circumstances, but negative relationship outcomes in others. Curran et al. (2015) suggested exploring the factors that moderate associations between emotion work and relationship well-being is one way researchers can understand the conditions under which emotion work is constructive or destructive for one's relationship. In light of this suggestion, I examine one's level of authenticity (staying true to personal beliefs despite others' opinions and influence) as a moderator of the link between emotion work and relationship satisfaction.

Authenticity can be generally thought of as acting in ways that are congruent with one's true self and genuine desires (e.g., Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Neff & Harter, 2002; Wood, Maltby, Baliousis, Linley, & Joseph, 2008). One particularly comprehensive definition of authenticity comes from Wood et al. (2008), whose tripartite model suggests authentic individuals demonstrate consistency in their unconscious, conscious, and expressed inner states because they (a) experience low levels of *self-alienation* (disconnect between one's true self and conscious self-awareness), (b) are more likely to engage in *authentic living* (behave in accordance with one's conscious emotions and beliefs), and (c) are less likely to *accept external influence* (susceptibility to others' influence and conformity to others' expectations). The present study's conceptualization of authenticity closely aligns with the accepting external influence dimension in Wood and colleagues' (2008) model of authenticity.

At a conceptual level, authenticity is the crux of emotion work processes because a successful performance is based on an individual's ability to modify his or her authentic, felt emotions to meet the emotive demands of a situation and portray these emotions in a convincing

way to a partner. Yet, the larger the gap between one's genuine feelings and one's feigned emotions, the more strained that individual's personal and relational well-being may be from compromising their sense of authenticity (Hochschild, 1983). Several studies provide empirical support for the conceptual link between emotion work, authenticity, and relationship quality. Individuals who regularly suppressed their emotions felt less authentic in their social and intimate partner interactions up to a decade later, resulting in lower reported relationship satisfaction (English & John, 2013; Impett et al., 2012). Failing to express one's true emotions and elevating others' needs above one's own genuine desires is also associated with feeling more negative and less positive emotions, poorer relationship communication skills, feeling burdened by relationship stresses, and discomfort with receiving support (Harper & Welsh, 2007; Helgeson & Fritz, 1998; Impett et al., 2012). In contrast, possessing high levels of authenticity is associated with higher relationship quality. Lopez and Rice (2006) found relationship authenticity (avoiding deception and engaging in unobstructed self-disclosure in a relationship) was associated with reports of high relationship satisfaction, and Brunell et al. (2010) found partners with high authenticity scores had better relationship functioning (e.g., self-disclosure, trust) two weeks later and heightened relationship commitment and satisfaction four weeks later.

In light of these findings, I hypothesize there will be a positive association between emotion work provision and both partners' relationship satisfaction for individuals with high authenticity. Authentic individuals may feel less pressured to undertake extensive intrapersonal emotion management to produce a certain emotional display for their partner and may be more genuine in their interpersonal emotion work efforts overall. Similarly, those individuals receiving emotion work from authentic partners may also report higher relationship satisfaction from perceiving these actions as sincere. In contrast, I hypothesize there will be a negative association

between emotion work provision and both partners' relationship satisfaction for individuals with low authenticity. Less authentic individuals may provide emotion work in ways that feel more feigned to themselves and that appear somewhat forced to their partners, resulting in less satisfying intimate ties. These moderation models will also be computed separately for men and women, as past research demonstrated inconsistent gender differences in authenticity: although Lopez and Rice (2006) found women scored higher on authenticity measures than men, Neff and Harter (2002) found women were more likely to classify their conflict resolution strategies as inauthentic compared to men.

The Present Study

Drawing on a combined relational developmental systems (Lerner et al., 2013; 2015) and gender relations (Ferree, 2010) perspective, the present study examines three main questions. First, what are the longitudinal associations between each partner's emotion work provision and relationship satisfaction? Second, do associations between emotion work and relationship satisfaction differ between men and women? Third, does male and female partner authenticity moderate these associations? To answer these questions, I analyze data from 1,932 couples who participated in Waves 1 and 2 of the German Family Panel (pairfam) study.

Relationship satisfaction, relationship duration, number of children, espousing a traditional gender role ideology, family work (i.e., housework and child care), and living in Eastern Germany will be included as control variables. Baseline relationship satisfaction is controlled for to ensure links between emotion work and Wave 2 relationship satisfaction are not merely due to prior levels of satisfaction with an intimate union. Relationship duration is included because the couples in the present study were from young adult and midlife cohorts, which likely translates into large variations in relationship length. In addition, past research

demonstrated declines in the provision of support during stress (including emotional support; Johnson, Horne, & Galovan, 2016) and marital happiness (VanLaningham, Johnson, & Amato, 2001) over time in intimate unions. Raising children is an important covariate because parenthood is negatively associated with marital satisfaction (Twenge, Campbell, & Foster, 2003), and, compared to childless couples, couples with children experienced stronger declines in their exchanged supportive behaviours over time (Johnson et al., 2016). In terms of gender role ideology, espousing traditional gender role attitudes was linked to lower emotion work provision for men, in particular (Erickson, 2005). Possessing egalitarian gender role attitudes is also associated with lower marital quality for women, but higher marital quality for men (Amato & Booth, 1995), or an overall decrease in marital satisfaction for both men and women (Lye & Biblarz, 1993). I control for two types of family work because men's involvement in housework and child care is positively associated with both partners' emotion work provision and women's marital well-being (Erickson, 1993).

Whether an individual resides in Eastern Germany is also an important control variable. Although East and West Germany are now reunified, their vastly different political environments following World War II led to enduring changes in each region's norms surrounding work and family life (Raab, 2017). East Germany fell under communist control and adopted policies that encouraged women's labour force participation and provided extensive child care services, while West Germany implemented policies that encouraged the male breadwinner and female homemaker family model, with only recent shifts to more gender egalitarian policies (Cooke, 2007; Seeleib-Kaiser, 2016). As a result, intimate partner relations within the home were modeled after these disparate policy environments (e.g., Eastern German men performed significantly more housework than Western German men; Cooke, 2007), which may translate

into differences in how emotion work impacts German partners' relationship outcomes: perhaps men's and women's emotion work performance would be equally important for partners' relationship satisfaction in the more gender egalitarian Eastern Germany, while women's emotion work alone may motivate both partners' relationship appraisals in the more conservative Western Germany.

This study makes at least three important contributions to the emotion work literature. First, aside from Curran et al.'s (2015) week long daily diary study, virtually all research on emotion work in intimate unions has been cross-sectional, and many studies continue to rely on only one partner's perception of emotion work in his or her relationship (e.g., Erickson, 2005; Wilcox & Nock, 2006). This study represents (to my knowledge) the first effort to explore longitudinal associations between emotion work and relationship satisfaction from a national sample of couples, enabling a rigorous exploration of individual and cross-partner effects. Second, most extant literature focuses exclusively on interpersonal forms of emotion work in intimate unions. I advance conceptualizations of emotion work as studied in couples research by connecting past and present representations of the construct through exploring intrapersonal (i.e., one's level of authenticity) and interpersonal (i.e., providing affective support) processes involved in partners' emotion management. Third, integrating a relational developmental systems perspective with a gender relations perspective is a novel conceptual approach in couples research. Uncovering if and under what conditions emotion work is beneficial for relationship health, findings from this research could be incorporated into family intervention settings to help couples adapt their emotion work performance to optimize relationship success, aligning with the stated goal of the RDS perspective (Lerner et al., 2013).

Chapter 3: Method

Procedures

Data from Waves 1 and 2 of the German Family Panel (pairfam) study were analyzed to answer the research questions (Brüderl, Hank, et al., 2015). Pairfam is a longitudinal, multi-informant study funded by the German Research Foundation that commenced in 2008 and is scheduled to culminate in 2022 with 14 total waves of data (Brüderl, Schmiedeberg, et al., 2015). The aim of pairfam is to explore couple and family dynamics and development over the life course from psychological, sociological, economic, and ecological perspectives (Huinink et al., 2011). As such, pairfam is led by a multidisciplinary team of researchers who collect data across four key areas of family life: intimate partnerships, becoming parents, parent-child dynamics, and intergenerational relations.

In 2008, 12,402 focal participants (referred to as anchors) were recruited into the pairfam study through a stratified random sampling procedure of nearly 350 German communities (Brüderl, Schmiedeberg, et al., 2015). The national sample of anchors belonged to three age cohorts at baseline: adolescents 15 to 17 years old (born between 1991 and 1993), young adults 25 to 27 years old (born between 1981 and 1983), and adults approaching midlife 35 to 37 years old (born between 1971 and 1973). Of the 12,402 anchors recruited, 7,234 were in intimate relationships and asked for permission to contact their significant others to participate in the study, to which 5,189 consented. A total of 3,743 intimate partners returned surveys, resulting in a subsample of 3,743 anchor-partner pairs. Anchors are interviewed annually with computer-assisted personal interviews and rewarded €10 for their participation, while partners are surveyed yearly with paper and pencil questionnaires and gifted €5 for their time. Participant retention is further encouraged through personalized cover letters with study details; thank-you cards

following survey completion; and a hotline, website, and brochure for participant questions and to share findings from the study. Further details about pairfam are included in the study's concept paper (Huinink et al., 2011), most recent field report (Brüderl, Schmiedeberg, et al., 2015), and website (http://www.pairfam.de/en/study.html).

Sample

The initial sample was the 3,743 intimate partner pairs recruited at baseline. Given the present study's purpose of exploring longitudinal links between emotion work and relationship satisfaction, I first filtered the sample to only include those individuals who had continuing partnerships from Wave 1 to 2 (n = 2,302). I then excluded those in the adolescent cohort (n = 336) given the instability and variability of intimate relationships in this age range (e.g., Carver, Joyner, & Udry, 2003), as well as those who reported being in same-sex partnerships (n = 34) because there were too few individuals in this subgroup for analysis, resulting in the final subsample of 1,932 heterosexual couples used in this study.

Most couples (n = 1197; 62.0%) were from the age cohort nearing midlife (baseline age for females: M = 34.96, SD = 3.45; baseline age for males: M = 37.81, SD = 3.71), and the remaining couples (n = 735; 38.0%) were in the young adult cohort (baseline age for females: M = 25.54, SD = 2.29; baseline age for males: M = 28.21, SD = 4.02). The vast majority (78.5% of females and 82.1% of males) reported German native with no migration background as their ethnicity, while the remainder reported non-German (8.3% of females and 5.0% of males), half German (6.6% of females and 5.2% of males), ethnic-German immigrant (4.6% of females and 4.5% of males), or Turkish (2.1% of females and 3.2% of males) backgrounds. Over three-quarters of participants (n = 1554; 80.4%) lived in Western Germany. Most participants finished secondary school (34.5% of females and 26.6% of males) or completed an undergraduate

university degree (35.5% of females and 33.0% of males) at baseline, and the median monthly net household income was €2,600 (*M* = €2,797; *SD* = €1,333). In terms of union characteristics, partners were together for 9.27 years (*SD* = 5.61) on average, and 66.1% were married, 26.2% were cohabiting, and 7.7% were living apart together. Over one-third (35.8%) of partners had no children, 24.5% had one child, 28.9% had two children, and the remaining 10.8% had three or more children.

Measures

Emotion work. An emotion work scale was developed from six items assessed at Wave 1 that measure emotionally supportive behaviors in intimate unions. Parceling procedures were utilized to generate three groupings of items based on conceptual similarity. Parceling is a useful strategy to help streamline latent variable computations by reducing the number of parameters to estimate when a scale has a large number of items (Little, 2013). Parcel 1 was comprised of three items from Bodenmann's (2000) Dyadic Coping Questionnaire that measured individuals' supportive behaviours toward their partners during times of stress. Participants were asked: "When your partner is stressed out, how often do you react in the following ways?" Items were: "I let my partner know that I understand him/her," "I listen to my partner and give him/her the chance to express himself/herself," and "I support my partner in concrete ways when he/she has a problem." Parcel 2 consisted of two items from the Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) that assessed one's frequency of self-disclosure to a partner: "How often do you tell your partner what you're thinking?" and "How often do you share your secrets and private feelings with your partner?" The response scale for parcels 1 and 2 ranged from 1 = *never* to 5 = *always*, and mean scores for all items in each parcel were computed. Parcel 3 consisted of one item adapted from the Positive Problem Solving Behavior scale of

Bodenmann's (2000) Marital Communication Questionnaire and assessed participants' constructive behaviours during conflicts with their partners in the past six months. Participants were asked: "When you have a disagreement with your partner, how often do you engage in the following behaviours?" The item was: "Listen to and ask questions of your partner in order to understand better." Responses ranged from 1 = *almost never or never* to 5 = *very frequently*. Each parcel corresponded to each of the three pre-existing pairfam subscales, and these parcels were used as indicators of the latent emotion work construct.

Relationship satisfaction. Male and female partners' satisfaction with their intimate unions was assessed with one item adapted from the Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998) at Waves 1 and 2: "All in all, how satisfied are you with your relationship?" Responses ranged from 0 = *very dissatisfied* to 10 = *very satisfied*.

Authenticity. The mean of three items adapted from the Autonomy Scale (Noom, Dekovic, & Meeus, 2001) assessed participants' levels of authenticity at Wave 1: "I often change my mind after hearing what others think," "I strongly tend to follow the wishes of others," and "I often agree with others, even if I'm not sure." Responses ranged from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *absolutely*, and items were reversed coded so that higher values corresponded to higher levels of authenticity. Cronbach's alpha for these items was .67 for males and .68 for females. These items are similar to those from well-established authenticity scales, namely the accepting external influence dimension on Wood et al.'s (2008) 12-item authenticity scale (e.g., "I am strongly influenced by the opinions of other people," "I usually do what other people tell me to do"). Wood and colleagues' (2008) confirmatory factor analyses revealed the accepting external influence items were strong indicators of the latent construct authenticity (standardized factor loadings ranged from .64 to .74).

Control variables. At baseline, participants were asked to report on their relationship duration in months (recoded into years) and their relationship satisfaction. Participants also specified the number of children in their household at the time of the interview, as well as whether they resided in Eastern Germany or not. The mean of two items adapted from Hill and Arránz Becker (2004) measured the extent to which participants had traditional gender role ideologies: "Women should be more concerned about their family than about their career," and "A child aged under 6 will suffer from having a working mother." Responses ranged from 1 = *disagree completely* to 5 = *agree completely*. To assess one's involvement in housework and child care tasks relative to his or her partner, participants were asked the following question adapted from Baxter (2002): "To what extent do you and your partner share duties in the following domains?" The domains were "housework (washing, cooking, cleaning)" and "taking care of the children." Available responses for each domain were: 1 = *(almost) completely my partner*, 2 = *for the most part my partner*, 3 = *split about 50/50*, 4 = *for the most part me*, 5 = *(almost) completely me*, 6 = *another person*, and 7 = *doesn't apply to our situation*. Responses were recoded as missing if they indicated someone else performed housework (.2% for females and .2% for males) and child care (.1% for females and 0% for males) tasks or if these tasks were irrelevant to participants' situations (housework: 1.5% for females and .8% for males; child care: 14.5% for females and 11.6% for males), resulting in a response range from 1 to 5 for housework and child care responsibility. Importantly, the inclusion of raising children as a covariate will help compute accurate model estimates for those couples who reported child care involvement does not apply to their situations, as this missingness is due to the fact that they have no children.

Missing Data

I handled missing data through full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation.

FIML utilizes all available data in the variance/covariance matrix to estimate model parameters, producing less biased estimates than traditional deletion or mean substitution methods (but similar estimates to multiple imputation; Johnson & Young, 2011). FIML is grounded in the assumption that data are missing at random (MAR)—a missing data mechanism where auxiliary variables explain patterns of missingness rather than values of the focal variables themselves (Acock, 2005). Although missing data appears to be highest for child care involvement (36.7% for females and 35.8% for males), not all of this data is technically 'missing' because many of these couples did not have children. As such, it is more accurate to say missing data in the study ranged from 0% on raising children and living in Eastern Germany to 8.40% on women's housework involvement. Given that there were only a handful of missing cases for emotion work and authenticity, I tested the MAR assumption for male and female partners' relationship satisfaction at Wave 2 only (even though missing data was also very low for these variables: 2.0% missing for females and 1.9% missing for males). Two logistic regressions were computed (one for male partners' Wave 2 relationship satisfaction and one female partners' Wave 2 relationship satisfaction), and baseline relationship satisfaction, age, ethnicity, education, and income were included as predictors. Females with lower levels of education were more likely to have missing values on relationship satisfaction at Wave 2 (β = -.302, $Exp(\beta)$ = .74, $x^2(1) = 5.13$ p = .024). Education seems to serve as a key mechanism that predicts whether females will disclose information about their relationship satisfaction, supporting the use of FIML to estimate missing data.

Attrition Analysis

Six independent samples t-tests were computed to discern whether participants who continued in the study and those who attrited differed on baseline values of the focal variables

(i.e., emotion work, relationship satisfaction, and authenticity). Two statistically significant differences emerged: females who ended their relationships had lower initial levels of relationship satisfaction (n = 13, M = 7.38, SD = 2.06) compared to those who maintained their relationships (n = 1932, M = 8.34, SD = 1.74; t(1892) = 2.17, p = .030), and females who ended their relationships had higher initial levels of authenticity (n = 14, M = 4.43, SD = .44) than those who continued in the study (n = 1924, M = 3.90, SD = .76; t(13.57) = -4.41, p = .001).

Analytic Plan

I first checked statistical assumptions for the focal study variables (i.e., emotion work, relationship satisfaction, and authenticity), followed by computing descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for all study variables. Next, all modeling procedures were performed in Mplus 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012). A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was computed to test how well the measured indicators represented the latent construct emotion work for male and female partners. An actor-partner interdependence model (APIM; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) was then computed to examine associations among male and female partners' emotion work provision and relationship satisfaction. APIM's are utilized when there is "mutual influence" (Kenny et al., 2006, p. 144) between individuals' cognitions and behaviors within a dyad (i.e., non-independent data) and when researchers have 'mixed' independent variables that fluctuate from partner to partner (within-dyad variation) and from couple to couple (between-dyad variation). The present study analyzes data from both partners in an intimate union on an independent variable (emotion work provision) that varies within-dyads (partners within an intimate union may have differing emotion work scores) and between-dyads (the average emotion work score of partners in one couple relationship may differ from the average score in another couple relationship), necessitating the use of this modeling procedure. Finally, latent

variable interactions were computed to test the moderating influence of authenticity following procedures outlined by Maslowsky, Jager, and Hemken (2015).

Five common global fit indices were used throughout the analysis to assess model fit following cut-off scores suggested by Little (2013): the chi-square test (x^2), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR). Good model fit is indicated by a non-significant chi-square value (i.e., the implied and observed variance/covariance matrices do not substantively diverge from each other), but this test is biased by sample size and may lead to unwarranted model rejection in large samples (Little, 2013). As such, Little (2013) recommends the use of additional model fit indices. For the CFI and TLI, values greater than .90 indicate acceptable model fit and values greater than .95 indicate good fit. For the RMSEA and SRMR, values less than .08 indicate acceptable model fit and values less than .05 indicate good fit.

Chapter 4: Results

Assumption Checking, Descriptive Statistics, and Bivariate Correlations

Four statistical assumptions (normal distribution, multivariate normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity) were tested prior to data analysis. First, normality was confirmed by inspecting histograms of focal variables and computing skewness and kurtosis values for all variables (skewness less than 3 and kurtosis less than 8 indicate normally distributed variables; Kline, 2016). Second, multivariate normality was confirmed through linear regression plots that revealed normally distributed relationship satisfaction residual scores at all values of emotion work. Third, linearity was confirmed through inspecting scatterplots of correlations between focal study variables. Finally, homoscedasticity was confirmed through inspecting scatterplots that verified error variances of residuals were consistent across all levels of emotion work.

Table 1 contains descriptive statistics for the study variables. Participants performed emotion quite frequently (females: $M = 4.01$, $SD = .58$; males: $M = 3.79$, $SD = .62$), were in highly satisfying relationships (females Wave 1: $M = 8.43$, $SD = 1.74$ and Wave 2: $M = 8.10$, $SD = 1.95$; males Wave 1: $M = 8.56$, $SD = 1.65$ and Wave 2: $M = 8.18$, $SD = 1.79$), and were rather authentic in their interpersonal interactions (females: $M = 3.90$, $SD = .76$; males: $M = 4.02$, $SD = .72$). In terms of the control variables, participants tended to have gender role attitudes that were somewhat traditional (females: $M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.16$; males: $M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.09$), and female partners generally took on more responsibility for housework ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .73$) and child care ($M = 3.70$, $SD = .73$) than male partners ($M = 2.16$, $SD = .81$ and $M = 2.34$, $SD = .70$, respectively).

Turning to the bivariate correlations (also depicted in Table 1), higher levels of emotion work were moderately associated with higher relationship satisfaction for male and female

partners. There was also a small positive association between emotion work and authenticity and between relationship satisfaction and authenticity for both partners. Couples who were in longer-term relationships and had more children tended to perform less emotion work. Associations among emotion work, housework, and child care were in opposite directions for male and female partners: although higher emotion work was linked to men's increased housework and child care involvement, higher emotion work was linked to women's decreased housework involvement and not linked to her child care involvement. The associations among emotion work, having a more traditional gender role attitude, and living in Eastern Germany were non-significant for male and female partners. These correlations suggest emotion work, relationship satisfaction, and authenticity may be positively interrelated for male and female partners, and there may be gender differences in emotion work based on personal, familial, and sociodemographic characteristics (reaffirming the inclusion of these control variables in the study).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A CFA for the latent emotion work variable was computed for male and female partners using parcel 1 (dyadic coping), parcel 2 (self-disclosure), and parcel 3 (constructive conflict behaviour). The final measurement model is presented in Figure 2 and fits the data well. The dyadic coping and self-disclosure parcels were particularly strong indicators of the emotion work latent construct for male and female partners, as evidenced by standardized factor loadings well above .30 (i.e., the conventional cutoff for acceptable indicators; Brown, 2015). The constructive conflict behaviour parcels served as more moderate indicators of emotion work, but still had factor loadings above the acceptable cutoff (.45 for female partners and .48 for male partners).

Actor-Partner Interdependence Model

Next, I proceeded to compute the APIM to test associations among male and female

partners' emotion work provision and relationship satisfaction. Equality constraints were applied to each pair of pathways (one at a time) and a chi-square difference test was computed to test whether path coefficients were substantively different *within* and *between* male and female partners. If constraining paths to equality reduced model fit (i.e., if there was a statistically significant chi-square difference), then the paths were deemed substantively different and the constraint was dropped. All within- (e.g., actor) and between-gender (e.g., partner) pathways were significantly different. The control variables (baseline relationship satisfaction, raising children, relationship duration, traditional gender role attitudes, housework responsibility, child care responsibility, and lives in Eastern Germany) were then added to the model. Baseline relationship satisfaction was regressed only on future relationship satisfaction (with covariances specified among baseline male and female relationship satisfaction and male and female emotion work), and the other control variables were regressed on all variables in the model. Non-substantive paths were pruned one by one to produce the most parsimonious final model, with female child care involvement, male and female housework involvement, and male and female traditional gender role attitudes being omitted. Global and local fit testing was conducted at each step of the analysis to evaluate areas of model misfit. In particular, a conceptually permissible covariance was added between the dyadic coping indicator and the constructive conflict behavior indicator for female partners.

The final model is presented in Figure 3, and model fit indices reveal good fit to the data. In terms of *actor effects* with the focal variables, female partner emotion work was linked to higher female relationship satisfaction one year later, and male partner emotion work was linked to higher male relationship satisfaction at Wave 2. The female emotion work-relationship satisfaction pathway was, however, significantly stronger than the male pathway ($\chi^2_{diff}(1) =$

19.86, $p < .000$). In terms of *partner effects*, female emotion work was associated with higher relationship satisfaction for men, but male emotion work was not linked to female relationship satisfaction ($\beta = .05$, $p = .119$). Looking at *within-gender* results, the link between female emotion work and her own relationship satisfaction was significantly stronger than the link between her emotion work and the male partner's relationship satisfaction ($\chi^2_{diff}(1) = 29.51$, $p < .000$). Similarly, the association between male emotion work and his own relationship satisfaction was significantly stronger than the non-significant partner effect from his emotion work and the female partner's relationship satisfaction. Overall, the strongest predictor of Wave 2 relationship satisfaction for both partners was female partners' prior emotion work provision.

Turning to the control variables, Wave 1 and Wave 2 relationship satisfaction variables were positively and significantly associated for male and female partners, supporting its inclusion as a covariate. Having more kids was linked to lower emotion work provision (females: $\beta = -.21$, $p < .000$; males: $\beta = -.17$, $p < .000$), but was not linked to Wave 2 relationship satisfaction (females: $\beta = -.02$, $p = .464$; males: $\beta = .02$, $p = .538$). Men who were in longer-term relationships reported providing less emotion work ($\beta = -.08$, $p = .018$; females: $\beta = -.06$, $p = .113$), and those who were in longer-term relationships also reported higher relationship satisfaction (females: $\beta = .05$, $p = .028$; males: $\beta = .08$, $p = .001$). Men's child care involvement was only linked to his own increased emotion work performance ($\beta = .12$, $p < .000$; females: $\beta = -.02$, $p = .611$), but neither her ($\beta = .02$, $p = .348$) or his ($\beta = .002$, $p = .945$) relationship satisfaction. Finally, living in Eastern Germany was linked to higher emotion work performed by female ($\beta = .07$, $p = .032$) and male ($\beta = .18$, $p < .000$) partners, but was only linked to men's increased relationship satisfaction ($\beta = .05$, $p = .024$; females: $\beta = .01$, $p = .609$).

Latent Variable Interaction Models

To test whether authenticity moderated associations between emotion work and relationship satisfaction, I computed latent moderated structural equation models in Mplus using the XWITH command (Maslowsky et al., 2015). I computed a measurement model for the latent authenticity variable, presented in Figure 4. Given the strong standardized factor loadings (ranged from .62 to .63 for female partners and .60 to .67 for male partners) and model fit indices for the authenticity CFA, I proceeded to estimate the structural models using Maslowsky and colleauges' (2015) two-step procedure. First, I computed a baseline model that examined direct effects of emotion work provision and authenticity on relationship satisfaction without any interaction terms to make model comparisons. Results from the baseline model are presented in Table 2. Notably, the only significant (albeit small) association that emerged was the positive link between male partner authenticity and his own relationship satisfaction.

Next, six latent variable interaction models were computed one at a time because of the computational complexity of estimating these models, as recommended by Muthén (2011). These interaction models represented all combinations of the focal variables for male and female partners (female emotion work x female authenticity, female emotion work x male authenticity, and male emotion work x male authenticity interaction terms were computed with female relationship satisfaction as the outcome variable; male emotion work x male authenticity, male emotion work x female authenticity, and female emotion work x female authenticity were computed with male relationship satisfaction as the outcome variable). To determine whether the latent variable interactions were significant, the relative fit of the baseline and interaction models are compared using a log-likelihood ratio test (D = -2[(log-likelihood for baseline model) – (log-likelihood for latent variable interaction model)], approximately distributed as a chi-square with 1 degree of freedom. If the log-likelihood ratio test is significant (i.e., a statistically significant

chi-square value is attained), then retaining the baseline model would result in a significant loss in model fit relative to the interaction model. In this case, the researcher should retain the interaction model.

The results from the latent interaction models are also presented in Table 2. The only significant latent variable interaction was between male emotion work and male authenticity with higher female relationship satisfaction at Wave 2 ($\beta = .06$, $p = .042$). This finding was further supported by the significant log-likelihood ratio test comparing the male emotion work x male authenticity → female relationship satisfaction interaction model to the baseline model ($\chi^2(1) = 4.81$, $p = .028$), which indicates that retaining the baseline model would result in a significant loss in fit relative to the interaction model. The moderating effect of male authenticity on the association between male emotion work and female relationship satisfaction is presented in Figure 5. Simple slopes tests were then computed in Mplus to determine whether each interaction slope significantly differed from zero. The low male authenticity slope (1 standard deviation below the mean for male authenticity) was not significantly different from zero (unstandardized results: $\beta = .10$, S.E. = .07, $p = .188$), while the high male authenticity slope (1 standard deviation above the mean) was significantly different from zero (unstandardized results: $\beta = .39$, S.E. = .09, $p < .000$). When male partners reported high authenticity, frequent emotion work was associated with higher female partner relationship satisfaction at Wave 2. When male partners reported low authenticity, however, their emotion work was not associated with female partner relationship satisfaction.

Turning to the other log-likelihood ratio results, the significant ratio test comparing the baseline model with the female emotion work x female authenticity → female relationship satisfaction interaction model suggests female authenticity may be an important moderator, yet

the interaction term itself was non-significant (but close; $p = .087$). The baseline model was retained as a result of these contradictory findings, and further research is needed on the role of female authenticity in the emotion work-relationship satisfaction link. The remaining four log-likelihood ratio tests were non-significant, indicating that omitting the interaction terms did not worsen model fit. Thus, male authenticity did not moderate the female emotion work-female relationship satisfaction or male emotion work-male relationship satisfaction associations, nor did female authenticity moderate the male emotion work-male relationship satisfaction or female emotion work-male relationship satisfaction associations.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Emotion Work as a "Labour of Love"

Guided by relational developmental systems (RDS) and gender relations theoretical perspectives, the present study examined longitudinal links between male and female partners' emotion work provision and relationship satisfaction, potential gender differences in these associations, and whether authenticity (i.e., staying true to one's self amid influence from others) moderated associations among the focal variables. The first notable finding was that providing emotion work for a partner was linked to one's own higher relationship satisfaction in the future, controlling for prior satisfaction levels. This finding provides an important contribution to the literature by corroborating and extending results from several cross-sectional studies (e.g., Erickson, 1993; Holm et al., 2001; Minnotte et al., 2010) with longitudinal data, demonstrating that emotion work provision can improve partners' perceptions of their relationship quality up to one year later. Individuals who perform emotion work may be engaging in a so-called "labour of love" because, although boosting a partner's positive emotions may be time consuming, psychologically demanding, or contrary to one's personal mood (Erickson, 2011), it seems to enhance—not undermine—the provider's relationship satisfaction. Perhaps feelings of burnout that may accompany emotion work efforts become mitigated by the rewarding end goal of building a positive relationship climate in which both partners benefit. Related research on sacrifice in intimate relationships (i.e., putting aside self-interest to benefit a partner) and emotional regulation processes supports this goal-oriented reasoning: individuals who made sacrifices for their partners to achieve positive relationship outcomes (e.g., to make a partner happy) reported higher relationship satisfaction and less relationship conflict (Impett, Gable, & Peplau, 2005), and achieving desired goals in a social interaction buffered the negative impacts

of strong emotional regulatory efforts on participants' well-being (Wong, Tschan, & Semmer, 2017). Exploring how motivations and intentions behind emotion work processes contribute to personal and relational well-being presents an exciting opportunity for future research.

The Centrality of Women's Emotion Work in Enhancing Relationship Satisfaction

In addition to the overall positive link between emotion work and relationship satisfaction, the findings also reveal notable gender differences when considering the strength of associations between these variables. The first gender difference was that women's emotion work provision was a significantly stronger predictor of both male and female partners' relationship satisfaction compared to men's emotion work. In other words, women's emotion-enhancing efforts were especially salient in managing a positive relationship climate. These findings reify arguments advanced by feminist scholars on how sociocultural norms underpinning the traditional male breadwinner and female homemaker family model continue to structure gender relations within the private context of an intimate union, despite the proliferation of alternative work and relational arrangements in contemporary society (e.g., Ferree, 2010; Risman, 2004). This model casts women as competent emotional supporters who possess an innate ability (and desire) to express and maintain family intimacy due to their biological childbearing capacity and traditional social role as family caregivers (Duncombe & Marsden, 1993). If gendered norms prescribe emotional care as an indicator of a female's appropriate performance as an intimate partner and a woman, then male partners' relationship satisfaction may be highly dependent on receiving this support and female partners' relationship satisfaction on the successful performance of this work.

These findings support Erickson's (2005) assertion that "women are held accountable for the performance of emotion work in ways that men are not" (p. 339)—apparently not only by

their partners, but also by themselves. It would be beneficial for researchers to consider the precise mechanisms through which broad sociocultural norms structure specific expectations and experiences around emotional care in intimate unions. While gender role attitudes may be one potential mechanism, these ideologies had no bearing on emotion work and relationship satisfaction in the present study (possibly because they assessed general views on women's involvement in work and family instead of partners' specific beliefs about affective need management in an intimate partnership). Overall, the findings suggest that the relational benefits of emotion work efforts appear to be strongest under the purview of women.

While women's emotion work lays the groundwork for both partners' positive relationship appraisals, why is this work an especially strong predictor of *her own* future relationship satisfaction? It could be that a sense of authority and self-affirmation are rooted in women's anticipated (and realized) roles as emotionally attentive partners. Being a prominent contributor of emotion work in a relationship—either through choice or custom—can be viewed as leveraging affective power in an intimate union (e.g., Curran et al., 2015; Duncombe & Marsden, 1993) that affords women a high degree of influence in shaping their relationship climate, which may boost their confidence as a responsive, indispensable partner and feelings of satisfaction in their union. This personal gain for women may also be complimented by relational benefits of experiencing the 'fruits of their labour' in their intimate partnerships: perhaps these emotional efforts encourage partners to reciprocate emotion work or related forms of family work (i.e., child care or housework; Erickson, 1993; Stevens et al., 2006) and facilitate additional pro-relationship cognitions that are tied to relationship satisfaction, such as sacrifice (Impett & Gordon, 2008) or commitment (Stanley, Rhoades, & Whitton, 2010). Additional research on how intrapersonal (e.g., self-esteem) and interpersonal (e.g., partners' relative involvement in

family work) factors may contribute to the positive link between women's emotion work and their relationship satisfaction is required.

Turning to male partners, the findings revealed that men's relationship satisfaction was better predicted by their partners' rather than their own emotion work. One explanation may be that the actual *quality* of emotion work provided by female versus male partners is notably different, with the former providing more effective emotional support than the latter. Several studies have demonstrated that although men and women engage in similar levels of supportive behaviors of a comparable quality in observational settings, they differ in how well they tailor that support to their partners' needs and perceive overall support exchanges in their relationships (e.g., Neff & Karney, 2005; Verhofstadt, Buysse, & Ickes, 2007). Although women provided positive support to male partners encountering stress by demonstrating interest, comfort, and love, several studies showed men engaged in more negative behaviours (e.g., spurring conflict; Neff & Karney) or were unable to adequately conceal their own negative emotions (Thomeer et al., 2015) in interactions when their partners were experiencing stress. Further, in a sample of married Belgian couples reporting on their own and their partners' supportive behaviours, participants stated that wives provided more and better support than husbands and negative helping behaviours (e.g., appearing disinterested, minimizing issues, criticizing) were more common from husbands than wives (Verhofstadt et al., 2007). Aligning with general trends in male and female partners' support exchanges, the emotion-specific support men receive from their female partners may be more helpful than what they provide (or at least is perceived as so), leading men to experience a stronger boost in relationship satisfaction from gaining emotion work while ascribing less importance to how their own emotive performance shapes their relationship cognitions.

The Moderating Role of Men's Authenticity

Finally, the findings revealed one instance in which authenticity moderated associations between emotion work and relationship satisfaction: men's authenticity moderated the association between male partner emotion work and female partner relationship satisfaction (variables that were otherwise unassociated). Specifically, the association between male emotion work and female relationship satisfaction became more positive the more authentic the male partner reported being, but if male partners were less authentic, their emotion work efforts had no influence on their partners' relationship satisfaction. Considering the way authenticity was measured in the present study may help shed light onto this finding. Authentic men—that is, men who can maintain their sense of self amidst influence from others—may perform emotion work with sincere interests in being responsive and caring in ways that foster their partners' relational well-being, even in the face of opposition from conventional standards of masculinity (e.g., independence, stoicism, emotional paucity; Holmes, 2015). While rigid norms of masculinity are sustained in many ways, one prominent way is through men restricting their own expressiveness while policing *each other's* behaviours to ensure they align with these valued standards (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Duncombe & Marsden, 1993). As such, highly authentic men may be better equipped to stay true to their personal convictions about being emotionally attentive partners and reject judgement from others who may challenge their 'manliness' for engaging in these actions (e.g., name-calling with negatively insinuated words such as "soft" or "effeminate"). In turn, women may report more satisfying ties if they interpret their authentic partners' emotion work as genuinely motivated rather than forced or feigned, especially if females expect less (but still desire) affective efforts from their male partners. These findings suggest men's emotion-enhancing efforts can positively impact their partners' relationship

appraisals, so long as these efforts are accompanied by a strong sense of sincerity that can withstand potential regulation from others lauding and enforcing traditional masculinity.

Limitations

Several limitations must be considered when interpreting these findings. First, although the dyadic coping, self-disclosure, and constructive conflict behaviour items comprising the emotion work scale are similar to items in other emotion work studies (e.g., Curran et al., 2015; Erickson, 2005; Minnotte et al., 2010; Strazdins, 2000), they were derived from condensed versions of pre-existing scales. Pairfam is a large-scale omnibus study that collects data on many constructs from multiple informants to elucidate the breadth of familial experiences, which necessitates the use of shorter measures that tap a wide range of personal and relational processes without excessively fatiguing respondents. The disadvantage of assessing emotion work with relatively few items from shortened scales is, however, offset by the advantage of understanding relational dynamics from a national sample comprised of both partners in an intimate union.

Relatedly, given emotion work's relatively recent empirical introduction into couples research (e.g., Erickson, 1993), the construct has been inconsistently measured across studies and likely contains additional dimensions not assessed in the present study. For example, the study by Strazdins (2000) is one of the few (if not only) that has attempted to develop and validate a measure of interpersonal emotion work, specifying three core dimensions: companionship (boosting positive emotions in someone else and enhancing closeness), help (reducing negative emotions in someone else and mediating conflict), and regulation (working with others to enhance their well-being and stop precarious action) behaviours. Although Strazdin's (2000) emotion work scale was directed toward individuals' broad relationship roles (e.g., worker, parent, friend, spouse) and not specifically tailored to intimate partners, it provides a strong

starting point for couples scholars to continue investigating the underlying dimensions of interpersonal emotion work processes and further refine the conceptualization and measurement of this multi-faceted construct.

Second, same-sex couples were excluded from the analysis due to the limited number of partners in this subgroup (n = 34), yet there may be notable distinctions in how emotion work influences relationship outcomes in same-sex versus different-sex partnerships. For example, Umberson et al. (2015) found women's emotion work minimized relationship boundaries through facilitating intimate conversation and sharing feelings regardless of whether they were in same-sex or heterosexual relationships. Conversely, men directed their emotion work to maintaining some relationship boundaries they deemed important for preserving intimacy, but enacted this process different based on their sexual orientation: heterosexual men struggled with being more emotionally open while opposing their partners' attempts at accelerating this process, whereas gay men enacted emotion work to respect their partners' space while remaining sensitive to calls for support (Umberson et al., 2015). Emotion work may, therefore, have varying consequences for relationship satisfaction depending on the relationship context in which it is enacted. In line with this suggestion, it may also be advantageous for future research to investigate emotion work in relationships characterized by more fluid gender identities and expressions. For example, Pfeffer (2010) discussed how the "social pull" (p. 178) for women to assume the bulk of emotional support both constrained and facilitated women's performance of emotion work for their transgender men partners (i.e., women transitioning to men), and Erickson (2005) demonstrated that levels of masculinity or femininity differentially predicted emotion work provision depending on its pairing with an individual's biological sex (male or female). Considering how emotion work processes contribute to relationship appraisals in unique

ways based on intersections of gender, sexual orientation, and sociocultural norms of emotional support represents an important area for future research.

Third, the results may not necessarily reflect the behaviours and cognitions of couples in other countries, as the way German couples negotiate emotion work may prove different than how these processes unfold in couples from liberal welfare countries such as Canada or the United States (where most emotion work research has been situated). Indeed, there may be more couple-to-couple variation in the emotional climate of unions within liberal welfare countries who experience an impasse of political messages that promote individualism and venerate gender equality, but provide inadequate state support to fully realize these ideals in everyday family life (Baker, 2006). Future studies could compare potential differences (or similarities) in patterns of emotion work and relationship satisfaction across several cultures or countries to better situate these processes within their respective sociocultural contexts.

Conclusion

Drawing on a conceptual framework informed by relational developmental systems and gender relations theoretical perspectives, the present study sought to answer three questions: (1) How is male and female partners' emotion work performance linked to each partner's future relationship satisfaction? (2) Are there substantive gender differences in associations between emotion work and relationship satisfaction? (3) Does each partner's level of authenticity moderate associations among these focal variables? The findings revealed that emotion work provision was linked to positive relationship appraisals one year later for male and female partners, but women's emotion work provision was particularly impactful for predicting both partners' relationship satisfaction. In addition, male partner's emotion work was only linked to women's enhanced relationship satisfaction if he also reported a high level of authenticity.

Providing emotion work for a partner may be akin to performing a “labour of love” that requires concentrated attention and potentially strenuous regulatory effort, but pays off in a positive relationship climate and more satisfying intimate ties. Nevertheless, there is diversity in how these processes unfold for male and female partners, as their emotion work is differentially “managed” by authentic self-representations and gender norms of affective care.

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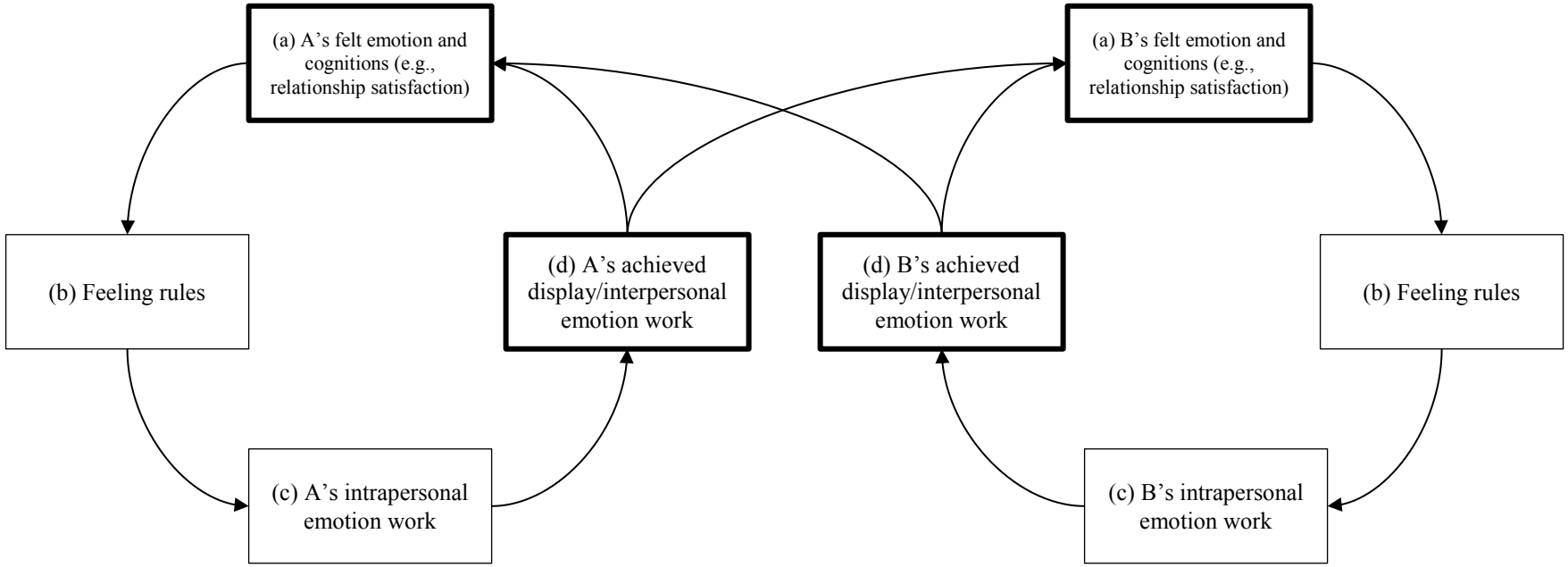
Appendix

Figure 1

Conceptualization of the Emotion Work Process in Intimate Relationships



Note: The present study focuses on the elements in the bolded boxes.

Table 1

Correlations and Descriptive Statistics for Females Above and Males Below the Diagonal (n = 1,932 couples)

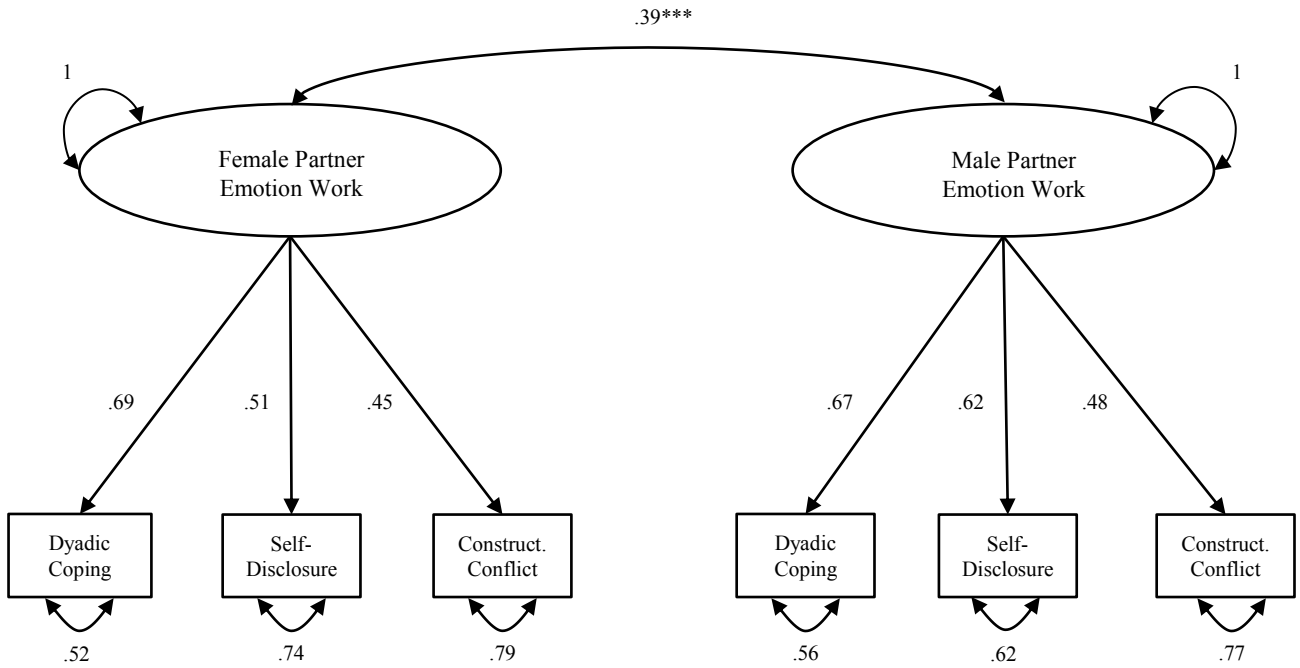
Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	*M*	*SD*	*Range*	*% Miss*
1. Emotion Work	**.21****	.30**	.15**	.35**	-.12**	-.15**	.03	-.05†	-.04	-.02	4.01	.58	1 – 5	0.10
2. Rel Sat W2	.27**	**.38****	.10**	.46**	-.04	-.10**	.03	-.09**	-.04	-.01	8.10	1.95	1 – 10	2.00
3. Authenticity	.13**	.12**	**.11****	.13**	.03	.03	-.08*	-.03	-.04	.04	3.90	.76	1 – 5	0.40
4. Rel Sat W1	.36**	.48**	.11**	**.28****	-.05†	-.08*	.05†	-.10**	-.06†	.01	8.43	1.74	1 – 10	2.60
5. Rel Duration	-.13**	.03	-.02	.01	–	.52**	.02	.17**	.05	.00	9.27	5.61	0–20+	0.30
6. Children	-.15**	-.04	-.02	-.02	.52**	–	.10**	.23**	.07†	-.01	1.18	1.10	0 – 6	0.00
7. Trad GRA	-.01	.05†	-.07*	.02	.09**	.13**	**.45****	.11**	.12**	-.17**	2.60	1.16	1 – 5	0.40
8. Housework	.09**	.00	.01	.02	-.18**	-.26**	-.22**	**-.56****	.46**	-.10**	3.83	.83	1 – 5	8.40
9. Child care	.10*	.04	.01	.05	-.06†	-.09*	-.11**	.36**	**-.42****	-.17**	3.70	.73	1 – 5	36.70
10. East Germany	.01	-.01	.09**	-.01	.00	-.01	-.20**	.10**	.11**	–	.20	.40	0 – 1	0.00
M	3.79	8.18	4.02	8.56	9.27	1.18	2.73	2.16	2.34	.20				
SD	.62	1.79	.72	1.65	5.61	1.10	1.09	.81	.70	.40				
Range	1 – 5	1 – 10	1 – 5	1 – 10	0–20+	0 – 6	1 – 5	1 – 5	1 – 5	0 – 1				
% Miss	0.20	1.90	0.30	2.50	0.30	0.00	0.60	7.90	35.80	0.00				

Note: Correlations between male and female partners' scores bolded along the diagonal for clarity. Rel = Relationship. Sat = Satisfaction. W1 = Wave 1. W2 = Wave 2. Trad GRA = Traditional gender role attitude. East German = Living in Eastern Germany at baseline. *% Miss* = Percent missing data.

** $p < .001$, * $p < .01$, $^{\dagger}p < .05$ (two-tailed).

Figure 2

Standardized Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for Male and Female Partners' Emotion Work Provision (n = 1,932)

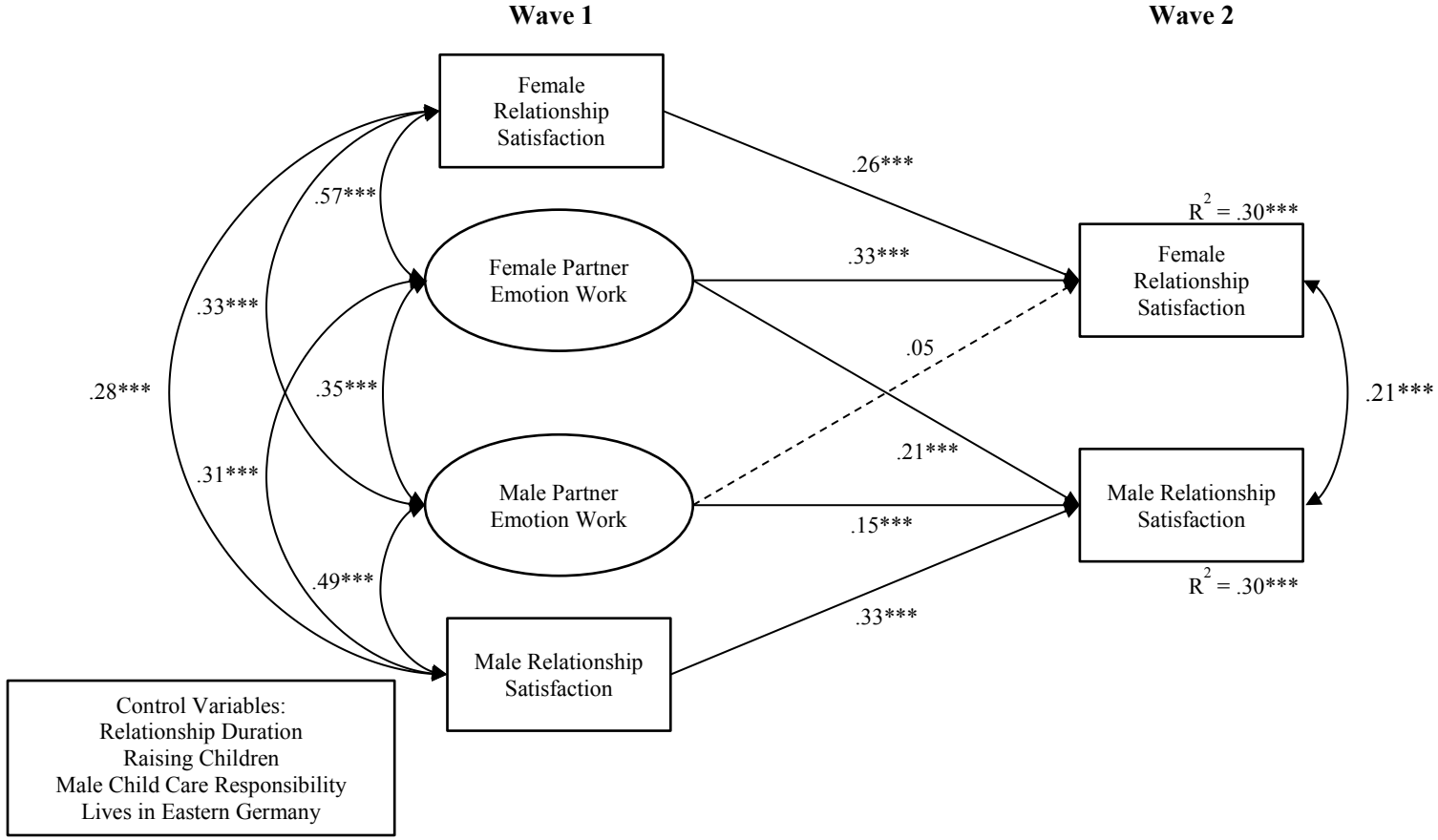


Note: Standardized estimates. Construct. Conflict = Constructive conflict behaviours. Covariances among male and female partners' dyadic coping, self-disclosure, and constructive conflict behavior indicators are included. Model fit indices: χ^2 (5) = 4.025; RMSEA = .000 (90% C. I. = .000, .028); CFI = 1.000; TLI = 1.002; SRMR = .008.

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Figure 3

Final Actor-Partner Interdependence Model for Male and Female Partners' Emotion Work and Relationship Satisfaction (n = 1,932)



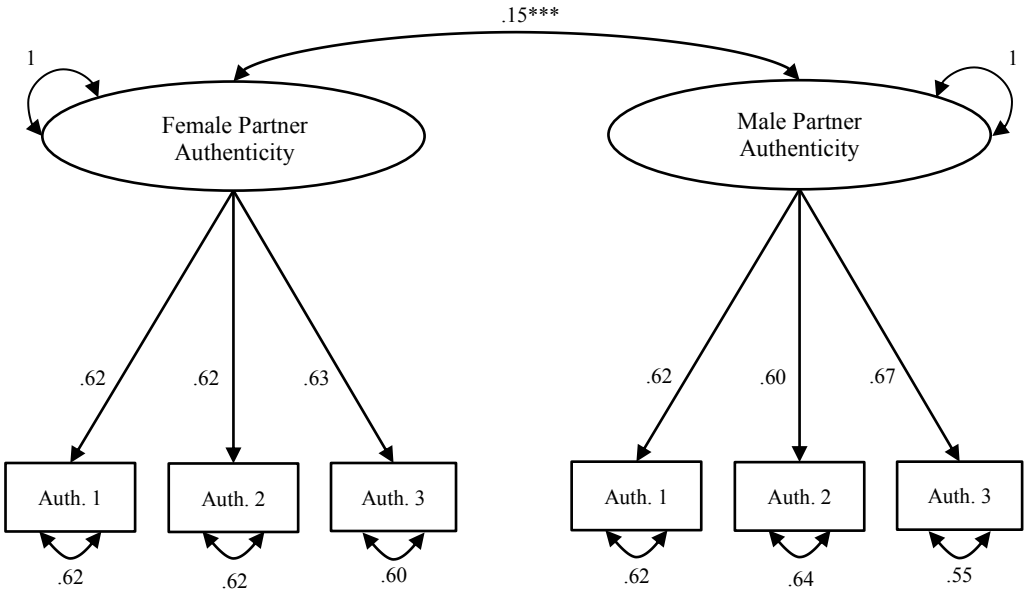
Note: Standardized estimates. Control variables regressed on all variables in model. Dotted line represents non-significant association.

Model fit indices: χ^2 (62) = 102.542; RMSEA = .024 (90% C. I. = .015, .032); CFI = .987; TLI = .976; SRMR = .020.

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Figure 4

Standardized Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for Male and Female Partners' Authenticity (n = 1,932)



Note: Standardized estimates. Covariances among male and female partners' authenticity 1, 2, and 3 items are included. Auth. = Authenticity. Authenticity 1 = "*I often change my mind after hearing what others think*." Authenticity 2 = "*I strongly tend to follow the wishes of others*." Authenticity 3 = "*I often agree with others, even if I'm not sure*." Items were reverse coded to represent higher authenticity. Model fit indices: χ^2 (5) = .899; RMSEA = .000 (90% C. I. = .000, .000); CFI = 1.000; TLI = 1.008; SRMR = .004.

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Table 2

Baseline and Latent Variable Interaction Model Results for Male and Female Partners' Authenticity (n = 1,932)

Baseline Model (No Interactions)				
Pathways		*ß*	*SE*	
Female Authenticity → Female Relationship Satisfaction		-.03	.03	
Female Authenticity → Male Relationship Satisfaction		-.02	.03	
Male Authenticity → Male Relationship Satisfaction		.06*	.03	
Male Authenticity → Female Relationship Satisfaction		.02	.03	
Latent Variable Interaction Models				
Outcome Variable	*ß*	*SE*	H_o	*D*
Female Relationship Satisfaction				
Interaction: Female Emotion Work x Female Authenticity	-.11	.06	-40700.30	10.12**
Interaction: Female Emotion Work x Male Authenticity	.01	.06	-40705.34	.04
Interaction: Male Emotion Work x Male Authenticity	.06*	.03	-40702.95	4.81*
Male Relationship Satisfaction				
Interaction: Male Emotion Work x Male Authenticity	-.02	.04	-40705.11	.50
Interaction: Male Emotion Work x Female Authenticity	.04	.04	-40704.43	1.85
Interaction: Female Emotion Work x Female Authenticity	.02	.06	-40705.11	.50

Note: H_o = Log-likelihood value. *D* = Log-likelihood ratio test statistic. Baseline model fit indices: χ^2 (75) = 142.798; RMSEA = .022 (90% C. I. = .016, .027); CFI = .986; TLI = .978; SRMR = .018. Baseline model H_o = -40705.36.

One degree of freedom used for all model comparisons.

** $p < .01$, *$p < .05$ (two-tailed).

Figure 5

Interaction Plot Illustrating the Moderating Effects of Male Partner Authenticity on the Association Between Male Partner Emotion Work and Female Partner Relationship Satisfaction