

FAMNET State-of-the-art Report

Division of Domestic Labour

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Introduction

In the second half of the twentieth century industrialized countries have witnessed substantial changes in their demographic and socio-economic structures that have posed significant policy challenges. For a start, in all OECD countries women entered into salaried employment in growing numbers.¹ In 1965, 12 of the 14 industrialized countries had female participation rates lower than 50%, whereas after three decades only four out of 21 had a less than 50% female participation rate (Brewster and Rindfuss 2000). What is more striking is the increase in the employment rate of *married mothers*, especially those with young children. More than fifty percent of all married/ cohabiting mothers across the industrialized countries are now in the labour force, although the figure ranges from a low of less than 50% in Southern European countries, to a high of over 75% in Scandinavian countries (LIS 2009). Despite the significant cross-national variations the overall increase in women's employment has been considered as one of the most influential changes in the labour markets of industrialized countries during the post-war era (Van der Lippe and Van Dijk 2001).

¹ As demonstrated by early and recent studies the increase in women's participation to labour force had little or no effect on occupational gender segregation or gender gap in earnings (Van der Lippe and Van Dijk 2001). Women are still underrepresented in managerial positions and overrepresented in clerical, sales and service work (Charles 1992; Charles and Grusky 1998; Neramo 2000). Moreover, gender occupational inequality is more pronounced in developed welfare states characterized by large public service sector and "mother-friendly" policies (Mandel and Semyonov 2006, 2005, Hansen 1997).

One consequence of this significant shift has been the decline of the traditional “breadwinner-homemaker” arrangement, which dominated the landscape of the Western family during the first half of the twentieth century. In most industrialized countries the idealized “male breadwinner” family is now outnumbered by the “dual-earner” family. The proportion of dual-earner couples have expanded throughout Europe. In Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK two-thirds or more of all couples with at least one partner working were dual-career couples, compared with less than half in the southern European countries (Hantrais 2004).²

These massive changes in demographic structure, however, are not followed by equally substantial changes in time use patterns in the division of domestic labour. In all countries, women continue to do a disproportionate share of unpaid work at home regardless of their employment status and continue to be the main care givers. Despite the trends of convergence in time use patterns between men and women, these changes mostly result from a considerable decline in time women devoted to housework, rather than a substantial increase in men’s contribution (Gershuny 2000). In short, revolutionary change in women’s work life has not been followed by an equivalent change at home.

This report provides a critical account of the literature on the division of domestic labour. The first section presents an overview of trends and cross-national similarities and differences in the division of domestic labour. The second section briefly summarizes the alternative individual level explanations, and then moves on to the integrative approach that emphasizes micro-macro linkage in understanding the variations in the division of housework and reviews the empirical support for the competing theories in the literature. The report concludes by summarizing the major findings and spelling out a programme for future research.

Definitional and measurement issues

In this report domestic labour is defined as “all forms of unpaid work done to maintain family members and/or a home” (Shelton and John 1996: 300). This definition of housework is

² Another challenge to the traditional family has come from increased marital instability and changing social norms. Cohabitation has become increasingly popular, turning into a more permanent form of family, while marriage is no longer seen as the only accepted form of having a child. The proportion of marriages dissolved by divorce in the EU-15 countries is estimated at 15% for marriages entered into in 1960. The figure has doubled to 29% for those who married in 1980 (Eurostat 2007). Divorce has replaced death as a leading reason of single parenthood in many countries leading to significant increase in solo parenting.

widely accepted in the literature, with the single exception being whether childcare is included or not. The majority of early studies have treated childcare simply as a part of housework rather than differentiating it as a separate component of unpaid work (e.g. Nakhaie 1995, Coverman 1985, Ross 1987). This is mostly because it is hard to differentiate what constitutes childcare as distinct from other housework tasks. Furthermore the presence of children is associated with a shift to a more traditional gender division of household work (Evertsson and Neramo 2007; Nomaguchi and Milkie 2003, Huston and Vangelisti 1995, MacDermid, Huston and McHale 1990). The mother who stays at home to care for the newborn ends up doing more of the household work while fathers decrease their contribution.³ Also, the birth of a child adds a significant amount of extra housework, especially for the woman (Gershuny 2000, Hersch and Stratton 1997).

Although the boundary between childcare tasks and household chores is sometimes ambiguous, the implicit assumption that childcare is simply another type of housework is problematic: First, despite the fact that some housework tasks could be enjoyable for some people, housework does not necessarily provide the intrinsic satisfaction provided by spending time with children and is more likely to be regarded as an onerous activity (Smith 2006). Second, lowering the standards of childcare is more costly and problematic than lowering the standards of housework, and it has long term repercussions. Furthermore, there are practical and legal limits of lowering the standards of childcare, especially in terms of childcare done in the form of presence of adults or taking “responsibility”. Third, all other forms of housework can be fully outsourced without any loss of quality or utility while childcare can hardly be fully outsourced. Fourth, as a result of the first three points, childcare time has much less elasticity than housework. The contradictory trends of time spent in childcare and housework patterns also confirm this approach. Despite the growing number of employed mothers, the literature does not provide compelling evidence for decreased maternal time, while time spent in housework by women decreased drastically in the last decades. Fifth, a vast amount of childcare is done as a secondary activity or in the form of “presence of adults” while this could rarely be the case for housework. Broadly speaking, spending time at home while the infants are sleeping, can also be considered as a form of childcare given that it places a limitation on the adults time (Folbre 2004). Domestic chores

³ This is stated as one of the reasons of wives’ postpartum marital dissatisfaction (Cowan, Cowan, Heming and Miller 1991, Hackel and Ruble 1992). Women usually expect the division of domestic labour to get more egalitarian after the birth of the child; and thus the violation of this expectation leads to disappointment and increased marital conflict (Grote and Clark 2001).

however cannot be done just by “being present”. Sixth, although childcare and housework are interrelated, there are unique sets of factors predicting the performance of each (Deutsch, Lussier and Servis 1993). In line with these factors, recent research tends to analyze childcare and other forms of domestic labour separately.

Two types of survey instruments are commonly used to measure domestic labour. The first is in the form of a *stylized/direct question* where the respondent is asked to report his/her average time spent in particular household activities or relative share of housework (e.g. European Social Survey, round 2, 2005 or International Social Survey Programme 1994, 2002). Survey items vary considerably in their wording of questions (Coltrane 2000). In some surveys the respondents are asked to provide an estimate of time spent in “housework” in general while in others he/she is provided with a more narrowly defined list of tasks. Some surveys ask “who is *responsible* for a particular task”, while others ask “who *perform* the task”. An alternative survey instrument is *time-diary methodology* where respondents (diarists) record their basic activities on a given diary day (e.g. Harmonized European Time Use Survey, Multinational Time Use Study). The use of diaries to record daily activity patterns is at the core of time-diary methodology but time diaries differ in their format and way of collection.⁴ Such variations however do not lead to major differences in estimates (Harvey 1993).

The two major advantages of survey instruments over the alternative time-diary methodology are their lower collection cost and higher response rates. Completing a time diary is more demanding and time consuming activity which results in low response rates. Stylized estimates on the other hand are based on a few questions and could easily be integrated into a larger surveys providing rich source of information in many related areas (such as attitudes toward gender relations). Generally speaking the background variables in time diary surveys are more limited in scope.

Despite these drawbacks, time-diary methodology is considered to provide more accurate and reliable estimates of time use patterns as they are less prone to the “recall” problem or mis-

⁴ Time diaries differ in the number of days the diarist completes a diary, whether the diarist complete diary on the same day or retrospectively or report future activities (leave behind/yesterday/future), the length of the recall period, the length of slots in a diary, whether the time intervals are fixed or open, the collection of simultaneous activities, activity reporting and coding, and interview mode (for comparison of different options see Harvey 1993).

reporting due to social pressure (Gershuny 2000, Robinson 1997). Additionally the discrepancy between the respondent's and the researcher's definition of "housework" plays a more significant role in survey type questions (Kan 2008b). Previous research confirmed that stylized estimates tend to be higher than diary estimates (Juster et al. 2003, Bianchi 2000, Marini and Shelton 1993), especially in the case of men (Baxter and Bittman 1995). Using the British national household survey which contains both stylized and diary-based estimates, Kan (2008b) showed that there are indeed systematic errors in the stylized housework estimates. Men holding traditional gender role attitudes overreport their hours in stylized questions, especially when their diary hours are low. The tendency is reversed for longer hours. In brief, women are found to be reporting their housework time more accurately than men, which means that the gender gap in division of domestic labour based on stylized estimates are indeed underestimated (Kan 2008b).

Cross-national (dis)similarities and trends in domestic division of labour

The literature reviewed in this report provides estimates of men and women's contribution to housework for more than 30 countries for the period between 1960s and 2000s. The studies vary considerably in their geographic coverage, methodology, data, measurement of housework and choice of sample but the overall conclusion on the division of domestic labour is clear and consistent across countries: Women continue to do the majority of housework and childcare regardless of their employment status, albeit they reduced the housework time in the last two decades considerably while men increased theirs to some extent.

Fisher and Robinson (2009) used time diary estimates to compare the time use patterns of all men and women aged between 18 and 64 in 17 countries for the period around 2000. Women's time spent in unpaid work (excluding childcare) in Western and Eastern European countries is approximately 20 hours per week while European men spend 15 hours on average. Voicu, Voicu and Strapcova (2009) used European Social Survey (ESS02) to compare married/cohabiting men's and women's contribution to housework (excluding childcare) for a regular week-day and week-end day in 24 European countries. In all countries women reported to spend more time than men on housework, with the average difference being 14 hours. Gershuny (2000) analyzed Multinational Time Use Study (MTUS) surveys from 20 countries over three decades. In all countries women were found to be specialized in unpaid work while men in paid work.

Batalova and Cohen (2002) and Geist (2005) used the 1994 International Social Survey Program (ISSP) to analyze 22 and 10 countries respectively. Batalova and Cohen included all married respondents, while Geist restricted her sample to married/cohabiting respondents aged between 25 and 64 who worked or had a spouse who worked. In a more recent study Fuwa and Cohen (2007) analyzed 2002 ISSP data for 32 countries, with a sample restricted to married/cohabiting respondents aged over 18. Batalova and Cohen, and Geist measured gender division of labour by an index of four household tasks while Fuwa and Cohen (2007) used “average hours spend per week on household work”. Similar to others, all three studies found housework to be “women’s job” in all countries. Using data from the International Social Justice Project, Davis and Greenstein (2004) compared division of household labour between married couples in 13 countries. On average, based on the wives’ reports, housework is *always* or *usually* done by the wife in 7 percent of the households. The corresponding figure based on the husbands’ reports is 66 percent. The only country in the sample with the majority of households sharing housework about equally was Russia 67 percent according to husbands’ report and 60 percent according to wives). The highest percentage of households where husbands always or usually perform the housework was in the UK (5.8 percent according to husbands’ report) while it goes as low as zero percent in Slovenia, Japan, Czech Republic, the Netherlands and East Germany (all based on wives’ reports).

Another cross-national similarity is the persistence of gender segregation of household tasks. Routine housework tasks such as cleaning or cooking are mainly women’s responsibility while more intermittent tasks such as car maintenance or repairs are more often considered as male-typed (Coltrane 2000). Both earlier and more recent studies confirm the gender segregation in allocation of time spent on domestic labour. Berk (1985) report that American women perform 90 percent of repetitive tasks such as cooking, vacuuming, and bed making. Blair and Lichter (1991) confirmed the persistence of gender segregation of housework among American couples. Approximately 60 percent of men’s housework time was allocated to “male-type” tasks such as outdoor tasks, auto maintenance, managing bills or shopping, while women allocate more than 80 percent of their housework time to meal preparation, washing dishes, ironing/laundry or cleaning the house. A cross-national study of Gershuny (2000) also provides evidence in support of the gender segregation of household tasks. Men spend highest amount of unpaid work time in non-routine domestic work but devote very little time to cooking or routine housework such as cleaning.

Although gendered division of domestic labour and task segregation is consistent across countries, there are also considerable cross-national variations: *The amount of time* men and women spend in housework across countries; *the magnitude of change* occurred during the last couple of decades, *the amount of gender gap* within countries, and the *factors that affect division of domestic labour in a particular national context* differ across countries. In the study of Fuwa and Cohen (2007), for instance, average housework hours of married women per week varies from 29 hours in Mexico to 12 hours in Norway, while the figure for married men varies between 14 hours in Mexico to 4 hours in France. Gershuny and Kan (2009) reported significant cross-national variations in the proportion of unpaid work undertaken by women as well as in the trends of change. In social democratic countries such as Denmark or Sweden women's proportion of unpaid work declined faster compared to social capitalist regimes such as Italy or Germany. The individual level factors that affect the couples division of housework or men's contribution to unpaid work also varies by national contexts (Hook 2006, Evertsson and Neramo 2004, Fuwa 2004, Bittman et al 2003, Batalova and Cohen 2002). For instance Bittman et al. found that US women decrease their housework hours as their husbands' proportion of joint earnings goes from 1 to 0. Australian women who earn more than their husbands, on the other hand, increase their housework as their income increases. A comparative study of Sweden and the US however showed that, in contrast to Swedish women, US women increased their housework time when their husbands were economically dependent to them (Evertsson and Neramo 2004, Brines 1994).

Explanations for the domestic division of labour

There are six individual-level theories on the division of domestic labour that dominate the literature. All those theories put emphasis on the individual characteristics such as available resources or attitudes towards gender issues. However as recent research has pointed out, division of domestic labour depends on many reciprocally interacting factors on various levels. As a result, some recent research has developed a perspective that takes an integrative approach and putting a particular emphasis on macro-level factors. The first part of this section briefly reviews the individual level theories and the existing empirical support in the literature for those theories; while the following section presents the integrative approach that developed more recently.

Individual Level Theories

Theory of specialisation of Becker provides an explanation of division of labour from an economic perspective. The economic theory of family or the theory of specialisation interprets the division of labour as a utility maximising rational process, and argues that members of households allocate their time according to their comparative advantage in order to maximize the household utility (Becker 1991 [1981]). The comparative advantage of each individual depends on their human capital which is based on the specific skill investments he/she has made, and is also partially related to biological differences.⁵ The partner with the better market skills (and hence greater earning potential) at the time of the marriage will specialize in market work while the partner with higher domestic skills will allocate her/his time in household production. Because women typically happen to be the ones who have acquired comparative advantage in childrearing, and for men specialization in gainful employment, the theory predicts that women will allocate their time to domestic chores and childcare while men to market work.

A variant of this theme is *time availability* perspective, which states that the division of labour is based on the availability of partners to participate in housework and childcare. A partner who has more competing demands on his/her time spends less time in household tasks. Time availability has been operationalized as the employment status of partners (Coverman 1985), paid work hours (Bianchi, Sayer and Robinson 2004), the spouses work schedule (Presser 1994), number of children (Kamo 1991) or a combination of those (Bianchi et al. 2000).

As for the evaluation of theory in terms of explaining the division of domestic labour the findings are mixed. On the one hand, the literature provides substantial evidence on the negative association between women's time spent in paid and unpaid work; yet on the other, women continue to spend more time than men in unpaid work regardless of their paid work time. Furthermore the association between time constraints and time spent in household task differs considerably by gender (Bianchi et al. 2000). The negative association between hours spent in gainful employment is found to be greater for women than men (South and Spitze

⁵ Whether the sexual division of labour in the family depends on biological sex differences or gender specific educational investments remains to be a subject of debate (Blossfeld and Drobnic 2001). However, according to the theory even if the individuals were fully identical at the time of the marriage they would still gain from specialization since it would increase the productivity and raise household efficiency.

1994). As for childcare, given that both employed and non employed mothers increased their childcare time in the last four decades, factors other than time availability must be strongly affecting the parents' tendency to invest time in their children (Gauthier, Smeeding and Furstenberg 2004).

The third competing theoretical framework, *relative resources perspective*, discards the single household utility assumption of the theory of specialisation which has not been confirmed by the household time allocation data (see Browning, Chiappori, Lechene 2004, Blundell and MaCurdy 1998 for a review). The theory assumes that the individuals within the household have potentially conflicting interests. Couples try to strike the best deal in their own interest by bargaining over the allocation of time and other resources within the family. The division of labour in a family is therefore determined by “the comparative resourcefulness of the two partners in accomplishing the necessary household tasks” (Blood and Wolfe 1960: 66). Relative resources perspective regards unpaid work as “disutility”. As a result, the individual who has the greater resources is expected to spend less time in childcare and housework. Because it is mostly women who have lower resources the theory predicts that, in general, women will undertake the housework and childcare unless they happen to have higher resources compared to their husbands. In this regard, although the relative resources theory and the theory of specialisation differ in their assumptions, the predicted outcomes of these two are the same.

Although what constitutes a “resource” is a matter of dispute, women's relative financial power has been the most common way of operationalizing relative resources (e.g. Evertsson and Neramo 2004, Fuwa 2004, Brayfield 1992, Presser 1994, Ross 1987) followed by educational attainment, occupational status, age, social class or a combination of these (Deutsch, Lussier and Servis 1993, Coverman 1985). The findings for occupational resources or social class are contradictory and the most support for the theory comes from studies that used relative earnings as a proxy for relative resources (see Shelton and John 1996, for a review).

Assessment of relative resources theory (by using relative income) for the division of household labour provided quite consistent results for women, but the theory proved to be less powerful in explaining childcare alone. Coverman (1985), using both childcare and housework as dependent variables, did not find a strong support for the relative resources

hypothesis. Deutsch, Lussier and Servis (1993) found the discrepancy of income statistically significant in explaining fathers' involvement in childcare, but not the discrepancy in occupational prestige and education. Fernandez and Sevilla-Sanz (2006) analysed Spanish Time Use Survey data and found that women's relative share of housework decreases as their relative earnings increase only up to a certain point; while the relative time spent in childcare does not vary by spouse's relative earnings.

Three studies for the US that used relative income to test relative resources theory for explaining the domestic division of housework found that, in the range from husband's providing all the income to both partners' having equal earnings, the more women earn the more equal the division of labour (Evertsson and Neramo 2004, Greenstein 2000, Brines 1994). However the relationship for men was curvilinear. In other words, between the range where couples provide household income equally to women providing all, men decreased their contribution to housework. A recent study with British data, on the other hand, confirmed a linear rather than curvilinear relation (Kan 2008a, cf. Evertsson and Neramo 2004 for Sweden). As their economic independency increases, both men and women decrease their housework hours. Overall, the relative resources theory is supported mostly for women but results are mixed for men. Additionally, when tested by relative income, the theory is not supported for all income ranges, indicating that factors other than relative resources must also be taken into account.

A fourth, approach, is *the collective model*. While common in the current economic literature, this theory may be distinguished from the above by: first, it does not assume income pooling of individual members; second, does allow for heterogeneity of preferences and; third and most notably here, this approach leaves the details of internal household decision making unmodelled (Vermeulen 2002). Instead of modelling the intra-household decision processes explicitly, the collective model just assumes the outcome of household decision making is Pareto-efficient. In other words, the theory is silent on how families come to decision but states that the decisions are efficient.

The theories listed above can be grouped under "economic" perspective as opposed to gender perspective which criticizes the former for its ignorance of the gender dimension of the issue, and questions the theoretical viability of its underlying assumptions. According to gender sociologists, the fact that women continue to perform the majority of tasks regardless of their

employment status or income, signifies that there are factors affecting the allocation of time other than rational arrangements or bargaining based on available resources.⁶ The first variant of gender perspective, *gender ideology*, suggests that couples with egalitarian gender attitudes have more equal division of labour, while the second, *doing gender*, moves from a rather static conceptualization of gender, and theorizes housework and childcare as “enactment of gender” (South and Spitze 1994).

According to *gender ideology* approach individuals are socialized to adopt values and beliefs about the socially constructed gender norms. Gender ideology is considered to be a product of both childhood and adult experiences and it basically refers to individuals’ ideas about the appropriateness of various tasks for men and women, as well as the extent to which they consider men and women intrinsically different from one another (Coltrane 2000). According to this theoretical perspective, couples with egalitarian gender ideology are expected to share domestic chores equally while traditional couples would have a gendered division of labour.

Early studies presented conflicting findings regarding the husbands’ contribution to domestic labour. Ross (1987) found that husbands’ sex-role ideology was a significant factor in explaining their domestic hours (both housework and childcare) while in Coverman’s (1985) study it was not found to be significant. However, the studies from the 1990s onwards found both men’s and women’s gender ideology as a consistent predictor of division of domestic labour in various countries (see Davis and Greenstein 2009, Coltrane 2000 and Shelton and John 1996 for a review). Furthermore, studies show that housework tasks are also gender segregated. Routine housework chores such as cleaning or cooking are mostly done by women, while men usually perform more intermittent tasks such as car maintenance or repairs (Coltrane 1989, Berk 1985). Deutsch, Lussier and Servis (1993) analysed childcare and housework separately. While husbands’ with less traditional gender ideology was found to be positively related with childcare, wives’ attitudes was not statistically significant.

In their classical study, *Doing Gender*, West and Zimmerman (1987) formulate gender as “the product of social doings” rather than a set of traits or a role. From this perspective gender is “not simply an aspect of what one is but, more fundamentally it is something that one does, and does recurrently in interaction with others” (1987, 140). It is embedded in all

⁶ See Berk (1985) for a critical account of New Home Economics; see England (1993, 2003) and Nelson (1995) for a feminist critique to economic theory.

aspects of everyday life and it is produced and reproduced through daily interactions. Berk (1985) reformulates Becker's conceptualization of household as a "small factory", and argues that not only household goods and services but also gender is produced on a constant basis. In this regard women produce their gender identity by doing tasks that are traditionally/socially considered as feminine tasks, like childcare or housework chores such as cooking and cleaning. Men, on the other hand, produce and reaffirm their masculine identity by avoiding such feminine tasks.

Recent studies provided empirical support showing counter-normative situations in which individuals "do gender" by doing more or less housework to reaffirm their gender identity. Hook (2006) analysed men's unpaid work in 20 countries, finding that unemployed men "do gender" by spending less time in housework than employed men. Similarly the research on the US (Greenstein 2000, Brines 1994) also showed economically dependent men decrease their housework while Australian women who earn more than their husbands also found to be "doing gender" in an opposite way by increasing their housework hours (Bittman et al. 2003). Hochschild and Machung (1989) interviewed 150 US couples and showed that US women were undertaking the majority of housework even if they earn more than their husband. A more recent comparative study of Sweden and the US also confirmed this finding for US women (Evertsson and Neramo 2004).

In summary, despite considerable research, firm conclusions regarding the determinants of gender division of domestic labour have indeed remained elusive. Some studies found support for competing perspectives: Bianchi et al. (2000) and Geist (2005) concluded that *time availability*, *relative resources* and *gender ideology*, are all important predictors of the gender gap in domestic division of labour. Voicu, Voicu and Strapcova (2009) analysed the gender inequality in housework in across Europe and found support for both relative resources and gender perspectives. Similarly, research of Kan (2008a) supported both relative resources and gender ideology. As will be explained in further detail in the following section, one possible reason for this set of mixed findings is that individual level factors operate differently under a different macro context.

Integrative Approach:

According to the integrative perspective individual-level theories can only provide a partial explanation because the individual's behaviours are affected by the context with which they

have been surrounded. Depending on the policy structure of the country and socio-economic conditions, both the preferences of individuals and the cost of actions associated with those preferences can vary. Therefore, any account of individual decisions regarding the allocation of time would be inadequate without paying sufficient attention to the broader socio-economic and policy context within which individuals are embedded. For a start, policy structure of the country can mediate the effect of individual factors at the micro-level. The state, through its regulations and policy structure provides incentives as well as constraints within which individuals form their preferences and make their choices. For instance provision of long non-transferrable parental leave with high compensation level for fathers would decrease the financial cost of temporary withdrawal from employment, and thus encourage fathers to take leave and spend time with their children, especially at the early infancy period.

Taking such an integrative approach with a specific policy focus to explain domestic division of labour is a rather recent practice in sociological literature. Recently, studies have made some progress in identifying the relation between macro contexts and various individual outcomes. Ferrarini (2006) showed the relation between family policy benefits and cross-national poverty in households with young children, where child poverty seemed to be decreased by family policy transfers. Fuwa and Cohen (2007) found that the countries with substantive parental leave policies and with no discriminatory policies have more equal division of housework. The authors also found a mediating effect of parental leave policies on the effect of women's full time employment on domestic division of labour (excluding childcare). Smith and Williams (2007) created a father-friendly policy index to assess the relation between paternal time and father-friendly legislation. The authors concluded that both absolute and relative levels of paternal time are correlated with the policy index. Pettit and Hook (2006) showed the different implications of provision of publicly funded childcare and parental leave policies on the employment decisions of women. Extended leave provisions were found to be negatively associated with the effects of having young children on the probability of employment, while public childcare was positively associated. Hook (2006) found parental leave available to men as a key determinant of fathers' time spent on unpaid work. In conclusion, recent studies have highlighted the importance of adopting an integrative approach while explaining individual behaviour. They pointed out the necessity of investigating the different elements of policy packages separately in order to disentangle the effect of specific policy component. This project takes a further step in that endeavour by

focusing on the parenting behaviour under various policy settings and socio-economic conditions.

Concluding Remarks

The increased employment rate of women, in particular mothers with young children, is considered to be one of the most significant changes in the labour markets for the last decades. Despite the fact that women now spend more time in gainful employment, the domestic division of unpaid labour has remained surprisingly stable across countries. On the one hand, regardless of their employment status women still do the majority of housework and childcare in all countries. Yet on the other, there is also considerable unexplained variation in the gendered division of domestic work across countries. The literature provides a significant amount of evidence on the persistence of the gender gap in housework patterns as well as in the individual level factors associated with individual's decisions regarding allocation of time and family organization. However, studies that focus on explaining the underlying mechanisms of the division of unpaid labour in the family in the context of a considerable cross-national variation is still scarce.

The decisions regarding the allocation of time in households have significant repercussions for the whole society at the aggregate level. The importance of women's labour force and the demographic risk of declining fertility rates combined with aging society must alert policy makers about the work-life balance problems in the family and children's care. Given that men have not yet contributed enough to close the gender gap in parenting time as well as in housework, the persistence of gender differences in domestic division of labour continue to create "dual-burden" for working women (Hochschild and Machung 1989). In this regard, further research on gendered division of domestic labour can be instrumental in helping working mothers to alleviate their work-life balance in the way in which they would like.

It is against this background that future research should aim to fill the gap in the existing literature by: first, analyzing the effect of macro socio-economic context on the division of labour across time and countries; second, putting further theoretical effort to uncover the mechanisms governing the gendered allocation of time; third, participating in cross-discipline dialog to analyze the issue from a broader perspective; and last but not least, approaching the issue from a policy aspect where the role of welfare state and national context is a matter of interest.

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