
Cross-National Variations in the Division of Household Labor

Using data from the International Social Justice Project, we describe the division of household labor in married couple households using a sample of 13 nations (N = 10,153). We find significant differences in the division of household labor based upon respondents' nations of residence. We find support for the time availability approach; households where the wife is employed outside the home for pay are more likely to respond that husbands perform at least half of the household labor. We also find support for the relative resources approach; in households where wives' education equals or exceeds that of their husbands, husbands are more likely to perform half of the household labor. We find little support for the economic dependence approach. We suggest that future cross-national research should place individuals in context to determine why there are nation differences in the reported division of household labor.

Families as social institutions perform similar tasks regardless of social context. Families

serve as sites for teaching children how to be a part of the larger society. They also serve as the location for reproductive labor. It remains to be seen whether the processes through which these tasks are performed are the same across social contexts. More specifically, are the factors predicting who performs the reproductive household labor the same across social contexts?

The purpose of this research is to analyze reports of the division of household labor in married-couple households using data from the International Social Justice Project and to focus on five key issues: (a) Are there differences in the division of household labor between husbands and wives based upon their nation of residence? (b) Is there cross-national empirical support for the relative resources approach that explains the division of household labor? (c) Is there cross-national empirical support for the economic dependency approach that explains the division of household labor? (d) Is there cross-national empirical support for the time availability approach that explains the division of household labor? and (e) Do the factors that predict the reported division of household labor differ based upon the respondent's gender?

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BACKGROUND

Studies based in the United States have shown that although the amount and proportion of household labor spouses perform have changed since the 1960s, gender continues to

be the best single predictor of the time spent doing housework. Although American women's time spent doing housework has decreased and men's time spent doing housework has increased since 1965 (Robinson, 1997), women continue to perform the lion's share of household labor (see Coltrane, 2000, for a recent review). To explain inequalities in task allocation, social scientists have developed several conceptual approaches. We focus on three of these approaches.

The *relative resources* approach takes an exchange-based perspective, such that the division of housework reflects the resources that women and men bring to their relationships. Individuals with the most resources (e.g., earnings, education) use those resources to negotiate a favorable division of labor for themselves. This perspective presumes that household labor is viewed negatively by both spouses, and that both actively work to reduce their load (Shelton & John, 1996). In general, the research literature supports this perspective, although there are differences based upon the kind of relative resource measured. A related approach is the *economic dependency* approach (Brines, 1993), which suggests that housework is "women's work" because of wives' economic dependency upon their husbands. Because of this dependency, wives allocate more time to domestic work than their husbands do. The *time availability* perspective focuses on family members' time allocation between market and domestic work (Hiller, 1984). This perspective suggests that there should be a relationship between the number of hours that spouses work outside the home and the number of hours that they spend doing domestic work.

The research that examines these conceptual approaches has focused primarily on the United States and similar Western nations. Researchers have explicitly noted that contextual differences are crucial to understanding household processes, specifically the division of household labor (Batalova & Cohen, 2002; Calasanti, 2002; Kamo, 1994; Sanchez, 1993). Because this article analyzes cross-national data, we document previous research by nation type. The nation types are Western nations (United States, Great Britain, West Germany, and The Netherlands), former Soviet nations (Russia, Slovenia, Estonia, Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and East Germany), and an Asian nation (Japan).

Western Nations

Educational attainment is frequently used as a measure of resources. Men's educational attainment is positively associated with housework hours, and women's educational attainment is negatively associated with housework hours (Shelton & John, 1993). Some research has found that the more equal spouses' contributions to the household income, the more equal the division of labor (Greenstein, 1996). Further, as wives' absolute income increases, their time spent on household labor decreases (Brines, 1993).

Many studies find a negative association between the hours that wives and husbands spend in paid work and the time they spend on household labor (South & Spitze, 1994). Some research has also found a relationship between wives' paid employment hours and husbands' relative housework amount, suggesting that the husbands of employed wives perform a greater proportion of housework than do husbands of nonemployed wives (Shelton & John, 1993).

Dutch women's share of domestic work is affected most by the presence of young children, but also depends on the husband's economic resources (Van der Lippe, 1994). The higher the educational level of Dutch couples, the greater the husbands' contribution to the household labor (Van Berkel, 1999). The influence of wives' education seems to outweigh the influence of husbands' education, as long as there is not too much of a difference in their educational levels. When she has a little more education, he does more housework; when she has a great deal more education, her educational level has no effect on his housework (Van Berkel). Additionally, Dutch households with employed wives had a more egalitarian division of labor regarding child care-related activities than did households with nonemployed wives (Tavecchio, Van Ijzendoorn, Goossens, & Vergeer, 1984).

Former Soviet Nations

Late in the Soviet period, Czech women's and men's time spent on household work was becoming more similar, mainly because of the changing employment patterns of Czech women (Viteckova, 1985). Mikova (1991) found that wives' increased education increased the time spent on children, and left less time to spend on

housework. In her study on dual-income households in the Czech Republic, Krizková (1999) found that men perform less than half of household tasks except for minor repairs. She also found that Czech households were more egalitarian in their division of labor than were Hungarian and Polish households (Krizková).

Lobodzinska (1977, 1978) found that Polish women performed the majority of the housework regardless of employment status. Further, she found that men's household hours increased with their education levels, and are highest in couples in which both spouses are employed and have the highest levels of education. Andorka and Falussy (1982) found that during the period from 1963 to 1977, Hungarian women spent less time working for pay and doing housework overall.

East German women prior to unification had access to low-cost child care and were expected to be full participants in the labor force (Ferree, 1995). State-sponsored subsidies for basic necessities left women less dependent on men for economic survival. As such, we could expect married East German women to be likely to negotiate an egalitarian division of labor.

Toward the end of the Soviet era, Estonian households moved toward shared housework. Estonian women's attitudes reflected a desire for personal efficacy rather than a complete focus on their husbands' demands (Haavio-Mannila & Rannik, 1988). Research in post-Soviet Russia noted that more Russians believed that they had egalitarian marriages in 1989 than in 1995 (Bodrova, 1995). Additionally, Russian women were more likely than Russian men to report that wives performed more of the household labor (Vannoy & Cubbins, 2001).

Japan

A comparison of college graduates in the United States and Japan found support for bargaining power theories of the division of household tasks in both nations (Strober & Chan, 1998). The housewife role is endorsed in Japan, which leads to women playing a greater domestic role than their spouses (Xuewen, Stockman, & Bonney, 1992). Household labor is shared more equally in the United States than in Japan (Kamo, 1994). Kamo found no support for the time availability perspective in his Japanese sample, and minimal support for both the economic dependency and relative

resources approaches. In a more diverse sample of Asian nations, Sanchez (1994) found no support for the relative resource or time availability approach.

Much previous research on the division of household labor has included women and men separately during analysis. Performing separate analyses acknowledges that women and men face different opportunities and expectations, both within and external to their families, and does not ignore the possibility that gendered behaviors and beliefs may be reflected in the data.

Hypotheses

We first hypothesize that the reported division of household labor will not be the same across all nations. We also have two nation-specific hypotheses. First, we hypothesize that individuals living in Japan will be more likely than respondents living in the United States to report that wives perform the majority of the household labor. Second, we hypothesize that individuals living in former Soviet nations will be less likely than respondents living in the United States to report that women perform the majority of the household labor.

Three of our hypotheses are specifically related to the three conceptual approaches described above. We hypothesize that wives with the same or more education than their husbands will have a lower likelihood of performing the majority of the household labor. Next, we hypothesize that a wife's increased relative income will decrease the likelihood of her performing the majority of the household labor. Third, we hypothesize that a wife's full-time employment will decrease the likelihood of her performing the majority of the household labor. Finally, we hypothesize that there will be significant differences in the predictors of the reported division of household labor by gender of the respondent.

METHOD

Data and Measurement

The data for these analyses come from the International Social Justice Project, a collaborative effort among 12 nations to conduct a comparative study of popular perceptions of economic and social justice (Kluegel, Mason, & Wegener, 1995). Implementation of a cross-national survey

design must address issues of comparability of the data, and other issues of data quality (Harkness, 1999). Because the questionnaire used to collect these data was written in each nation's native language, translation issues were not as problematic as in other cross-national studies. Additionally, the survey design and sampling design were the same in all of the nations, thereby meeting the need for comparability of the data (Kluegel et al.).

Probability samples were employed in each nation; data were gathered between March 1991 and March 1992. A total of 17,386 individuals were interviewed, of whom 11,212 were currently married and living with their spouses. Our analytic sample was limited to married individuals. Although data for both husbands and wives are reported here, only one spouse in each household was interviewed. A total of 10,153 respondents gave codable responses to all of the items used in the analyses. Most of the missing data were on the age variables.

Dependent Variable

The division of household labor was measured by asking each respondent who usually did the housework. The English version of the question reads "Please tell me how the following household responsibilities are divided. Are they always done by yourself, usually by yourself, equally between yourself and your partner, usually by your partner, or always by your partner? First of all, housework, such as cooking, cleaning and laundry?"

Because respondents could be women or men, responses to this question were recoded to *usually or always wife*, *equal*, and *usually or always husband*, with *usually or always wife* as the reference category in our analyses. Individuals who have someone else do the housework (either another family member or a paid employee) were excluded from the analyses.

Some readers may be concerned with the validity of the International Social Justice Project measure, particularly with regard to estimates of the exact distribution of household labor. Several large-scale data collection projects implemented in Europe have included exactly the same measure or response categories, however (see Krizková, 1999; Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung). As Coltrane (2000) noted, studies focusing on

men's relative rather than absolute amount of housework performed identify more significant predictors and explain more variance in the reported division of labor. Consequently, we believe that this measure of the usual division of household labor is both valid and reliable, and provides findings that are comparable with other cross-national research projects.

Independent Variables

A measure of whether the person is employed for pay outside the home either full time or part time was included for both spouses. These measures were included as dummy variables, with not being employed outside the home as the reference category.

For international comparisons, the authors of the International Social Justice Project recoded education of both respondent and spouse using the Comparative Analysis of Social Mobility in Industrial Countries (CASMIN) classification system. The CASMIN system classifies education based on two criteria: a hierarchy of both tenure and required intellectual ability (elementary, secondary, and postsecondary), and whether the education is general or vocationally oriented (Konig, Luttinger, & Muller, 1988). The resulting classification system has seven levels that we used to construct a relative measure of education between spouses, coded into three categories: *wife has greater educational attainment*, *wife and husband equal*, or *husband has greater educational attainment*. The husband with greater educational attainment was the reference category.

Respondents were asked their individual and household income. Within nations, the question used different metrics based on each nation's currency. For example, the income figures for Germany are in German marks per month, whereas the income figures for Japan are in yen per year. We standardized each individual's household income level by first calculating the median income levels within each nation, then computing a ratio for each respondent's household income levels. Within any given nation, respondents whose household income was at the *median* for their nation's data received a score of 1.00; a respondent whose household earned *half* the median income received a score of 0.50, and so forth.

We also created a measure of the wife's relative income by dividing her income by the total

household income. Thus, a wife who earned none of the household income received a score of 0; a wife who was the sole earner received a score of 1.00. For husbands, the wife's income was calculated as the total household income minus the respondent's income. Wife's relative income was then calculated as described above.

Control Variables

Because more people living in a home will increase the amount of household work to be completed, we controlled for the reported number of children in the home. The ages of both spouses at interview are included as continuous variables. We include a dummy variable for each nation in the analysis, with the United States as the reference group. This approach measures the difference in the reported division of household labor for each nation as compared with the United States.

We performed all analyses with separate models for women and men. For reasons of comparison, we also performed the analysis with the full sample, controlling for respondent's gender. In the full sample analysis, being male is the reference category.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics on the distribution of the dependent variable—self-reports on who performs most of the housework—for each of the 13 nations by respondent's gender. For the wives' reports, the distributions range from Japan—where housework is *always* or *usually* done by the wife in 97.8% of the households—to Russia, where wives report that they *always* or *usually* do the housework in 38.2% of the households. The data reported by husbands for the percent of households where wives *always* or *usually* do the housework range from 92.6% (Japan) to 31.3% (Russia). Table 2 presents descriptive statistics on the covariates in the logistic regression models.

Logistic Regression Analyses

Because the dependent variable is a set of ordered responses ranging from the wife performing the majority of the household labor to

the husband performing the majority of the household labor, we used ordinal logistic regression in our analyses. Two coefficients are presented for each covariate: the logistic regression coefficient (the effect on the log-odds), and the effect on the odds. These last coefficients indicate the factor by which a change in an independent variable changes the odds of the husband being reported as performing half or more of the household labor, as compared with the wife performing the majority of the household labor.

Full sample. The first model in Table 3 shows the predictors of the reported division of household labor, with the gender of the respondent included as a control variable. Women are 26% less likely than men to say that husbands perform at least half of the household labor.

Relative household income does not affect the reported division of household labor, but relative education does have a significant effect. Respondents in households where the wife has more education than her husband were 21% more likely to say that the husband performs at least half of the household labor; when the wife and husband have equal educational attainment, the respondent was 19% more likely to say that the husband performs at least half of the household labor. Respondents with more children were less likely to report that husbands performed at least half of the household labor.

Respondents in households with a full-time employed wife compared with a nonemployed wife were almost twice as likely to report that the husband performed at least half of the housework. Respondents with a part-time employed (as opposed to nonemployed) wife in the household were 27% more likely to report that the husband performed at least half of the housework. The wife's relative income has no effect on the reported division of household labor.

Compared with those with nonemployed husbands in the household, respondents in households with a full-time employed husband were half as likely to report that the husband performed at least half of the household labor. Respondents with a part-time employed husband in the household were about one third less likely as respondents with nonemployed husbands in the household to report that the husband performed at least half of the household labor. Older husbands were less likely to

TABLE 1. HUSBANDS' AND WIVES' RESPONSES (%) TO HOUSEWORK ITEM FOR 13 INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT NATIONS

	Who Does the Housework?				
	Always Wife	Usually Wife	About Equal	Usually Husband	Always Husband
Bulgaria					
Husband (<i>n</i> = 497)	20.3	49.3	25.8	2.2	2.4
Wife (<i>n</i> = 482)	37.6	33.4	27.6	1.2	0.2
Czech Republic					
Husband (<i>n</i> = 372)	19.6	48.1	30.6	0.8	0.8
Wife (<i>n</i> = 359)	22.0	38.7	37.3	1.9	0.0
Estonia					
Husband (<i>n</i> = 279)	7.9	43.4	44.1	4.3	0.4
Wife (<i>n</i> = 275)	21.5	40.7	35.3	1.5	1.1
West Germany					
Husband (<i>n</i> = 428)	22.2	51.6	21.5	1.2	3.5
Wife (<i>n</i> = 356)	50.6	36.5	11.0	1.4	0.6
East Germany					
Husband (<i>n</i> = 292)	12.3	52.4	31.2	2.1	2.1
Wife (<i>n</i> = 297)	37.7	37.7	23.9	0.7	0.0
Hungary					
Husband (<i>n</i> = 314)	26.1	37.9	30.9	1.9	3.2
Wife (<i>n</i> = 309)	39.8	30.7	26.9	1.9	0.6
Japan					
Husband (<i>n</i> = 258)	62.8	29.8	5.0	0.4	1.9
Wife (<i>n</i> = 276)	79.3	18.5	2.2	0.0	0.0
Netherlands					
Husband (<i>n</i> = 608)	22.4	51.2	25.3	1.0	0.2
Wife (<i>n</i> = 510)	39.8	41.8	17.6	0.8	0.0
Poland					
Husband (<i>n</i> = 502)	32.9	43.0	18.7	2.0	3.4
Wife (<i>n</i> = 471)	52.2	30.1	13.6	2.8	1.3
Russia					
Husband (<i>n</i> = 499)	3.8	26.5	66.7	2.6	0.4
Wife (<i>n</i> = 494)	9.3	28.9	60.1	1.4	0.2
Slovenia					
Husband (<i>n</i> = 385)	29.1	46.5	17.9	3.4	3.1
Wife (<i>n</i> = 480)	45.6	36.3	17.7	0.4	0.0
United Kingdom					
Husband (<i>n</i> = 311)	21.5	42.8	29.9	4.2	1.6
Wife (<i>n</i> = 356)	41.0	35.4	21.9	0.8	0.8
United States					
Husband (<i>n</i> = 359)	14.8	42.1	40.4	1.7	1.1
Wife (<i>n</i> = 384)	24.7	42.2	30.5	1.6	1.0
All nations					
Husband (<i>n</i> = 5,104)	22.0	43.8	30.3	2.1	1.8
Wife (<i>n</i> = 5,049)	37.8	34.9	25.6	1.3	0.4

Note: Total working sample *N* = 10,153.

be reported to perform at least half of the household labor. Respondents living in Czechoslovakia, Estonia, and Russia were more likely than respondents living in the United States to report

that husbands performed at least half of the household labor, and respondents living in West Germany, Japan, Poland, and Slovenia were less likely than respondents living in the United

TABLE 2. MEANS (SD) OR PERCENTAGE FOR STUDY VARIABLES BY GENDER

	All Respondents (N = 10,153)		Wives (n = 5,049)		Husbands (n = 5,104)	
	M or %	SD	M or %	SD	M or %	SD
Relative household income	1.38	16.39	1.56	23.07	1.20	2.80
Relative educational levels						
Wife has more education	22.5		23.5		21.5	
Husband and wife equal	44.5		45.1		43.8	
Husband has more education	33.0		31.3		34.7	
Wife's characteristics						
Relative income	.36	.34	.24	.27	.47	.36
Employed full time	42.0		41.8		42.2	
Employed part time	12.1		12.5		11.7	
Age	44.09	13.59	44.18	13.45	43.99	13.73
Primary education	22.0		22.3		21.8	
Midrange education	38.5		37.5		39.5	
Secondary education	21.8		21.6		22.1	
Postsecondary education	17.7		18.6		16.7	
Husband's characteristics						
Employed full time	71.0		71.7		70.3	
Employed part time	2.7		2.5		3.0	
Age	46.88	13.93	46.87	13.92	46.88	13.95
Primary education	16.1		16.6		15.5	
Midrange education	42.9		42.9		42.9	
Secondary education	18.0		17.9		18.0	
Postsecondary education	23.1		22.5		23.7	
Number of children	.90	1.05	.92	1.06	.88	1.05

States to report that husbands performed at least half of the household labor.

Female respondents. Wives who have educational attainment equal to that of their husbands were almost 30% more likely to say that the husband performs at least half of the household labor as compared with wives with less education than their husbands. There is no significant effect of relative household income. In households with more children, women were more likely to say that they perform the majority of the housework.

Compared with nonemployed women, wives who are employed outside the home full time were 57% more likely to be performing, at most, half of the housework. Wives who were employed outside the home part time were 31% more likely than nonemployed women to be performing, at most, half of the housework. There is no effect of wives' relative income on the division of household labor.

Compared with women with nonemployed husbands, women whose husbands are em-

ployed full time were 44% less likely to say that their husbands perform at least half of the household labor, whereas those with husbands employed at least part time were 42% less likely to say that their husbands perform at least half of the household labor. Women with older husbands are more likely to report performing the majority of the housework. Women living in Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Hungary, and Russia were significantly more likely than women living in the United States to report that their husbands perform at least half of the household labor, and women living in West Germany, Japan, Poland, and Slovenia were significantly less likely than women living in the United States to report that their husbands perform at least half of the household labor.

Male respondents. Men whose wives have more education than they do are almost 40% more likely than men who have more education than their wives to say that they perform at least half of the household labor. There is no effect of the spouses having equal levels of education on

TABLE 3. LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS PREDICTING DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD LABOR FOR MARRIED PERSONS IN 13 NATIONS

	All Respondents (N = 10,153)			Wives (n = 5,049)			Husbands (n = 5,104)		
	B	SE B	e ^B	B	SE B	e ^B	B	SE B	e ^B
Household characteristics									
Spouses have equal education	.18*	.05	1.19	.26*	.08	1.29	.11	.07	1.11
Wife has more education	.19*	.06	1.21	.04	.10	1.04	.33*	.09	1.39
Relative household income	-.02	.02	.98	-.01	.03	.99	-.02	.03	.98
Number of children	-.20*	.03	.82	-.21*	.04	.81	-.20*	.04	.82
Wife's characteristics									
Relative income	.11	.08	1.12	.06	.17	1.06	.24*	.12	1.27
Employed full time	.64*	.06	1.89	.45*	.11	1.57	.79*	.08	2.20
Employed part time	.24*	.08	1.27	.27*	.13	1.31	.22*	.11	1.25
Age	.00	.01	1.00	.00	.01	1.00	.00	.01	1.00
Husband's characteristics									
Employed full time	-.68*	.07	.51	-.58*	.10	.56	-.69*	.11	.50
Employed part time	-.39*	.15	.67	-.55*	.23	.58	-.27	.19	.77
Age	-.02*	.01	.98	-.02*	.01	.98	-.02*	.01	.98
Nation									
Bulgaria	-.08	.07	.92	.18	.11	1.20	-.29*	.10	.75
Czechoslovakia	.35*	.08	1.42	.75*	.11	2.12	.00	.11	1.00
Estonia	.65*	.08	1.92	.69*	.13	1.99	.65*	.12	1.91
West Germany	-.32*	.09	.73	-.60*	.16	.55	-.14	.11	.87
East Germany	-.02	.09	.98	-.01	.13	.99	-.01	.12	.99
Hungary	.15	.08	1.16	.26*	.13	1.30	.10	.12	1.10
Japan	-1.89*	.19	.15	-2.49*	.38	.08	-1.56*	.23	.21
Netherlands	-.07	.08	.93	-.14	.12	.87	-.01	.10	1.00
Poland	-.48*	.08	.62	-.42*	.12	.66	-.53*	.11	.59
Russia	1.56*	.07	4.76	1.60*	.10	4.96	1.57*	.10	4.80
Slovenia	-.51*	.08	.60	-.38*	.12	.68	-.60*	.12	.55
United Kingdom	.14	.09	1.15	.09	.13	1.09	.21	.12	1.23
Gender of respondent	-.30*	.05	.74						
Intercept (equal)	.32			-.23			-.13		
Intercept (husband)	.47*			-.12			.07		
χ ²		1,402.4*			666.7*			757.4*	

Note: e^B = exponentiated B. Husband has more education is the reference category for relative education measures. Not in the labor force is the reference category for employment status for husbands and wives. The United States is the reference category for nation of residence. Gender of respondent coded as 1 for women and 0 for men.

*p < .05.

men's reported division of labor. There is also no effect of relative household income on men's reports of the division of household labor. Male respondents with more children are less likely to report that they perform at least half of the household labor.

Men whose wives are employed full time were more than twice as likely as men whose wives are not employed to report that they perform at least half of the housework. Compared with husbands of nonemployed women, men

whose wives are employed part time are 25% more likely to report that they perform at least half of the housework. Wives' relative income does have a statistically significant effect on how much housework husbands perform: The greater the proportion of household income earned by the wife, the more likely the husband is to report that he performs at least half of the household labor.

Men employed full time were half as likely as nonemployed men to report that they perform

at least half of the household labor. Older men were slightly less likely to report that they perform at least half of the household labor. Men living in Estonia and Russia were significantly more likely than men living in the United States to report that they perform at least half of the household labor, and men living in Bulgaria, Japan, Poland, and Slovenia were significantly less likely than men living in the United States to report that they perform at least half of the household labor.

DISCUSSION

We report the findings of logistic regression analyses examining factors predicting the division of household labor in the nations included in the International Social Justice Project. We found support for our first hypothesis; there are significant differences by nation in the likelihood that husbands are reported to perform at least half of the household labor. We also found support for our first nation-specific hypothesis; individuals living in Japan were significantly more likely than those living in the United States to report that wives were performing the majority of the household labor. Other research also has shown the extent to which the separate spheres ideology regarding domestic labor in particular continues to be a driving force in Japan (Kamo, 1994; Xuewen et al., 1992).

There is mixed support for our second nation-specific hypothesis, which suggests that individuals living in former Soviet nations would be more likely than those living in the United States to report that husbands perform the majority of the household labor. Compared with those in the United States, respondents living in Russia, Estonia, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary were more likely to report that husbands perform at least half of the household labor, whereas Slovenians and Polish residents were less likely to report that husbands perform at least half of the household labor. It is possible that the residents of Slovenia and Poland were more likely than residents of other former Soviet nations to respond to the changing political and economic climate by reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes within the home (Lobodzinska, 1995; Vannoy et al., 1999).

We found support for our fourth hypothesis, which suggested that wives with the same or more education than their husbands would be less likely to perform the majority of household

labor. This finding supports the relative resources approach, but the ability to use one's relative power to negotiate out of unpleasant tasks is not the same for women and men. There are two possible explanations for this. First, because of low expectations for men's domestic work, men may have an easier time than women using their personal resources to negotiate a favorable division of labor. An alternative explanation is that women with more education than their husbands choose not to negotiate out of more household work in order to protect their own gendered identities. These are not necessarily competing explanations, but we are unable to determine the nature of the causal mechanisms with these data.

Because much of the literature includes absolute rather than relative levels of education, we also performed these analyses with both spouses' absolute educational attainment (analyses available upon request). Women with the lowest levels of education were significantly more likely than women with secondary education to perform the majority of the household labor. Further, less educated men were more likely than more educated men to report performing more household labor.

Our fifth hypothesis was that a wife's increased relative income would decrease the likelihood of her performing the majority of the household labor. Our research shows some support for the economic dependency approach. As women are less economically dependent on their husbands, there is a greater likelihood that men will be reported to perform more household work. This finding exists for men only, however. We suggest that wives' relative income is salient to men's perceptions of their contributions to the household. Wives with greater relative income seem to be able to negotiate a more egalitarian division of labor, at least in their husbands' eyes. Men may report that they usually perform at least half of the household labor when their wives have higher relative incomes because they recognize that they have a nonnormative household arrangement. They may feel more comfortable reporting their contributions because they are already in a nonnormative situation.

We also found support for our sixth hypothesis, which suggested that households where wives were employed full time would be less likely to report that the wives performed the majority of the household labor. Interestingly,

men were more likely than women to report that they performed at least half of the household labor if the wife is employed full time. This difference may reflect our sample not being composed of couples—that is, male respondents may actually perform more housework than the husbands of female respondents. It is more likely that men with full-time employed wives perceive that they perform half of the household labor because their wives are not at home to do “their share.” Wives’ employment makes the husbands’ performance more salient because it may seem to husbands as though they do a lot around the house. This also may be a function of comparison referents, because the male respondents may compare themselves with men whose wives perform (or they believe perform) the majority of the household labor.

Our final hypothesis suggested that there would be significant differences in the predictors of the reported division of household labor by gender of the respondent. There were no consistent effects of relative education across female and male respondents on the reported division of labor. The effects of wives’ relative income and employment status, and husbands’ employment status on the reported division of labor differ based on the spouse doing the reporting. These differences suggest that some characteristics of a household and relationship are more important to one spouse than the other. Specifically, spouses may focus on those characteristics more likely to be considered nonnormative (e.g., husbands’ reports of wife’s high relative income).

Further, there is a significant effect of respondent’s gender on the reported division of household labor, such that women are one fourth less likely than men to say that husbands perform at least half of the household labor. This is consistent with previous research assessing the discrepancy in women’s and men’s reports of the division of household labor, such that men tend to overestimate their contributions, but women do not (Kamo, 2000).

Directions for Future Research

Our research can guide researchers interested in family processes cross-nationally. Many of the hypotheses that we tested and would have liked to test were limited by the data. Because the International Social Justice Project was implemented primarily to examine economic justice

concerns, many of the usual predictors of family processes were not included.

The dependent variable asks who does the majority of the household labor rather than the actual amount of specific tasks that each household member performs. Respondents may not agree about which tasks are household labor, and not all tasks are performed with the knowledge of the spouse. This measure does allow examination of the division of household labor cross-nationally without privileging some tasks performed primarily in Western nations.

It is also possible that many of the predictors of the division of household labor found in this analysis vary across nations. Rather than creating complicated interaction terms for each nation, the better way to examine contextual effects is to model the division of household labor using multilevel modeling in a manner similar to recent work by Batalova and Cohen (2002). This kind of analysis is crucial to determining the characteristics of nations that cause or facilitate the variations in the reported division of labor shown here.

Our results suggest that in many nations, the power of the gendered social structure continued to be pervasive in the early 1990s. In all but one nation (Russia), respondents reported that women performed the majority of the household labor. Individual-level factors that influenced the relative balance of power within households also influenced the likelihood that men would perform at least half of the household labor. We find strong support for the time availability and the relative resources approaches, and moderate support for the economic dependency approach. The dependency approach seems to have more support in men’s reports of the division of labor. This may mean that to understand the division of household labor, we need to focus more attention on husbands’ interpretations of what happens in their homes.

To be able to understand how families negotiate paid and unpaid work, researchers need better data, especially if we intend to examine whether family processes differ by social or cultural context. Moreover, resources need not be focused solely on collecting survey data in many nations in order to evaluate theories across nations. An alternative approach would be to engage in a broad-scale data collection strategy focused on qualitative, process-based information. A more complete understanding of the human social world requires that we take

into consideration more of the social context as we create and evaluate social theory.

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