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Housework and social policy

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Abstract

We analyze the effects of social policy regarding women's employment and work-family conflict on the division of household labor in 33 countries. We classify policies according to Chang's (2000) equality of access (affirmative action and absence of discriminatory policy) and substantive benefits (parental leave and childcare services). Results show that countries without prohibitions against certain types of employment for women, and those with longer parental leave policies, exhibit a more egalitarian gender division of housework. Further, women's fulltime employment and higher income have stronger effects on the gender division of housework in countries with greater equality of access policies. However, longer parental leave policy is associated with weaker effects of women's full-time employment. The findings suggest that social policies affect not only the overall gender division of housework, but also the dynamics of micro-level negotiations. Such policies may contribute to the context in which gender roles in the labor market and in the family are defined.

Keywords: Housework; Social policy; Gender; Intra-household negotiation; Cross-national perspective

1. Introduction

Recent research on the gender division of household labor has examined how social context affects not only the overall division between men and women, but also the dynamics of negotiation between men and women. For example, Batalova and Cohen (2002) showed that countries with more macro-level gender equality also have greater housework equality between husbands and wives, holding constant individual couples' characteristics.

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However, Fuwa (2004) found that the returns to individual women's assets—especially their employment and egalitarian gender attitudes—were also greater in countries where women hold more power generally.

Researchers have thus situated processes driving gender inequality at the micro level within broader systems of gender inequality at the macro level. But we know little about the mechanisms by which macro-level patterns of gender inequality infiltrate these micro-level negotiations. Thus, Geist (2005) demonstrates that micro-level patterns are associated with broadly defined welfare regimes across 10 countries, but leaves open the question of "more specific causal mechanisms" (2005:25) to be investigated at the macro level. State policies regarding women's employment and work-family conflicts are a good starting point for such an investigation, given recent research suggesting that such policies have systematic effects on gender inequality at all levels (Esping-Andersen, 1999; Gornick and Meyers, 2003; O'Connor et al., 1999). In this paper, we use Chang's (2000) policy typology to test whether women's bargaining power over housework is associated with state policies regarding gender inequality in work and families: equality of access for women in the labor market and family and childcare services for dual-earner families.

2. Social policy, labor market, and the family

One of the most significant economic and social changes in the last several decades has been the increase in married women's labor force participation (Sayer et al., 2004). Even though more women are committed to the labor market, they perform the majority of unpaid labor in the United States (Bianchi et al., 2000) as well as across industrialized countries (Batalova and Cohen, 2002; Geist, 2005), reproducing gender inequality in the family and creating conflict between spouses (Hochschild, 1989).Women's family responsibility, in turn, often disrupts their careers, which has a negative impact on their wages later in life (Taniguchi, 1999). In response to these conflicts, how to reconcile work and family responsibilities has emerged as a leading social problem (Gornick and Meyers, 2003).

Meanwhile, research on the division of household labor has begun to move beyond micro-level analysis based on couples' and individual characteristics such as income, education and attitudes. This individual-level focus risks assuming that these resources are static in nature, and tends to reify their meaning. For instance, micro-level analysis has shown that spouses with more resources, such as full-time employment and higher incomes, do a smaller share of housework (see Shelton and John, 1996 for review). However, since the power of these resources is attributed to individuals, this research does not address how social conditions—and especially state policies—influence the negotiation over housework (Batalova and Cohen, 2002; Fuwa, 2004; Geist, 2005; Kamo, 1994).

States have responded to the problem in various ways, explicitly or implicitly. Some countries, such as Sweden, offer family policies such as public childcare to mitigate women's burden (Esping-Andersen, 1999). Eastern and Central European countries also provided generous childcare services and parental leave, but these were reduced after the collapse of socialist regimes. Liberal capitalist countries such as the United States, to the extent that they intervene at all, promote women's economic independence through affirmative (positive) action programs and anti-discrimination policy (Chang, 2000; O'Connor et al., 1999). Such social policies may influence the impact of women's labor force participation on the division of household labor, by changing the demand for and cost of a certain division of household labor or by promoting egalitarian gender ideology.

Earlier attempts to categorize patterns of state welfare policy focused on the treatment of employment relations. Esping-Andersen (1990), for example, argues that countries differ in their effort to "de-commodify" citizens by providing social security and lessen their dependence on employment. However, feminists faulted this state-market focus for neglecting the family, a prime institution for providing welfare for both workers and their dependents. Since women shoulder the majority of caring work, how states mitigate the gendered division of labor through market regulation and welfare provision affects gender inequality in the family as well as in the labor market (Gornick and Meyers, 2003; Lewis, 1992; O'Connor et al., 1999; Stier et al., 2001).

In response, Esping-Andersen (1999) argues that social democratic welfare states such as Scandinavian countries have "de-familialized" some reproductive functions such as child care. Providing social services and protection on a universal basis to individuals rather than traditional family units minimizes the risks to individual citizens' of either "market-failure" or "family-failure." In contrast, conservative countries such as Germany promote policies that encourage exclusion of married women from the labor market and dependence of wives on their husbands for social security. In these countries, families are expected to shoulder the function of social reproduction. Liberal countries such as the United States provide only minimal services in the case of market-failure. Since state provision of family services are almost non-existent, American families rely on services in the private sector.

A systematic analysis that incorporates the dynamics of macro-level factors will contribute to a better understanding of couples' division of household labor. Using Chang's (2000) categorization of social policies on women's employment into two aspects—equality of access policies and substantive benefit policies—this project will offer empirical tests of these multi-level dynamics. We take advantage of the 2002 International Social Survey Programme data to analyze the association between social policies and the division of household labor in 33 countries.

3. Ideological frameworks of social policy on women's employment

This study conceptualizes state policies as actively creating and reinforcing certain social conditions and gender norms regarding women's roles (Schneider and Ingram, 1997). In fact, Treas and Widmer (2000) suggest that "one indicator of the success of state interventions is whether state ideology is internalized by citizens and manifest in public opinion" (1410). Feminist scholars distinguish frameworks for labor market regulation according to their underlying ideologies of women and work (Kessler-Harris, 1987; Vogel, 1993). Chang (2000) suggests that social policies on women's employment may be decomposed into two aspects: equality of access and substantive benefits policies. This study uses her framework to test the effect of social policies on the division of housework.

3.1. Equality of access policies

Orloff (1993, p. 318) argues that since many women are excluded from paid labor, "commodification—that is, obtaining a position in the paid labor force—is in fact potentially emancipatory" for women. Equality of access policies encourage women's access to jobs and economic security, thus promoting women's economic independence (Chang, 2000; Orloff, 1993). State policies also affect ideologies regarding women's employment. Sjöberg (2004) argues that family policies can be seen as normative orders that "structure

world views... regarding the 'proper' role of women in society and the degree to which the participation of women in the labour market on equal terms with men is seen as something to be desired'' (112).

Countries differ in terms of implementing equality of access policies. Liberal countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia have implemented anti-discrimination and affirmative action policies (O'Connor et al., 1999). Between the 1960s and 1990s, occupational sex segregation in the managerial category was dramatically reduced in the United States and Canada (Chang, 2000). The female–male wage ratio for administrative and managerial workers in the United States is the highest among the most developed countries (Siaroff, 1994). In the United States, labor market occupational integration is strongly associated with gender earnings equality even for women who work in female-dominated occupations (Cohen and Huffman, 2003; Cotter et al., 1997). This means that social policies that encourage occupational integration may be beneficial to all women.

Equality of access policies may enhance women's opportunity as well as their sense of entitlement as workers. Nevertheless, these policies are limited in their effectiveness at reducing gender inequality to the extent that they treat workers as men, presumed not to have family demands on their time. Still, research shows that countries where women have advanced in economic and political areas have a more egalitarian division of housework on average (Batalova and Cohen, 2002). Further, the *effects* of women's resources on the division of housework within couples are greater in these countries (Fuwa, 2004).

3.2. Substantive benefit policies

Substantive benefit policies provide family and childcare services for dual-earner families (Chang, 2000). One of the most direct links to the gender division of housework might be through parental leave, which varies considerably in terms of length, levels of wage coverage, and restriction on who is eligible to take leave. For example, while the United States provides only 12 weeks of unpaid parental leave (and that for only some workers), Sweden offers 1 year of parental leave with 80% wage coverage (plus 6 month with lesser benefits). Norway also shows a rare case of state intervention in redistributing childcare responsibility to fathers, with a ''father's quota'' that reserves four weeks of parental leave exclusively for fathers—a policy that led to dramatic increases in the rate at which fathers took parental leave (Bruning and Plantenga, 1999). Some European countries also have the father's quota system, although the length of the leave is usually very short (see Gornick and Meyers, 2003: Table 5.3).

Family leave policies, however, often presume women's roles as wives and mothers. The former East Germany, for instance, allotted the ''household day'' to catch up on household tasks only to women. Although Sweden provides generous parental leave that may be taken by mother or father, most leaves are still taken by mothers, which may encourage prolonged absence from work (Hoem, 1995). Thus, parental leave policies are a double-edged sword: while they may mitigate women's family responsibility and encourage job continuity (Ruhm, 1998), patriarchal bias in the policy structure and low benefit rates may reinforce gender inequality in the market and in the family (Fagnani, 1999). In contrast to public childcare provision for very young children, which helps mothers continue working, parental leave encourages mothers to withdraw from the labor market at least temporarily. Since the 1994 expansion of the Child-rearing Allowance in France, labor force participation of women with two young children declined from 74% in 1994 to

56% in 1998 (International Labour Organization, 2005a). Also, nine months of paid leave reduces women's hourly wage by around 3% (Ruhm, 1998). Thus, where women are expected to withdraw from the labor force when they have young children, their economic assets may be less effective in equalizing the division of household labor.

4. Integrating micro-level factors in multi level contexts

As we have seen, the policy environment surrounding couples' division of household labor varies widely across countries. However, the economic analysis of housework has focused on individuals' resources such as employment status and income. Bargaining theory suggests that husband and wife negotiate to reach a household decision agreement based on their individual resources, until disagreement in their preferences reaches a divorce-threat point (McElroy, 1990; McElroy and Horney, 1981). For example, when wives have a full-time employment and high income, these resources are used in the negotiation with their husbands to realize a more egalitarian division of household labor. However, since the divorce threat point can shift depending on women's opportunities outside the marriage, "extrahousehold environment parameters" (McElroy, 1990, 1997)—such as social policies that increase the employability of women in the market—may influence the negotiation processes. The effects of such factors are rarely examined explicitly.

Asserting the importance of a multi-level analysis from a sociological perspective, Blumberg (1984) introduced an economic power model that incorporates the effect of macro-level power differences between men and women. She argues that the effect of individual women's resources on the division of household labor is "discounted" by women's macro-level economic dependency on men. This is the finding of Fuwa's (2004) cross-national study of housework, which shows that women's employment and gender ideology have stronger effects on the gender division of household labor in countries where there is less gender inequality in the labor market and political spheres.

However, macro-level economic power is unlikely to be the only structural factor that influences individual women's decision making processes. Folbre (1994) suggests a more complex model of interest and identity formation, in which individuals are influenced by the structural constraints of asset distribution, political rules, and cultural norms as well as personal preferences. Employed women's negotiation over the division of household labor may be simultaneously affected by material distribution in the labor market, policies that determine who bears the cost of family labor, and cultural norms regarding women's roles. Even personal preferences such as the enjoyment of caring for others—often treated as a matter of "taste"—are shaped in relation to these constraints; and individual choices, in turn, re-shape these structures.[1] Thus, structural factors "define identities and interests that specify the context of individual choice" (Folbre, 1994, p. 48).

We argue that social policy is one of the key contextual elements that shape economic power between men and women in the labor market, political rules that reduce or encourage the traditional division of labor, and cultural norms regarding who is responsible for caring the family. Social policy not only contributes material and ideological support for a certain division of household labor, but also affects how well women can use their

[1] Although Folbre's argument focuses on how individuals form group interests and identities, these dynamics would also apply to the processes in which individual women negotiate the domestic division of labor.

economic assets in individual negotiations. Geist (2005) finds that housework dynamics vary across social welfare regimes in 10 countries, holding constant variation in couples' individual characteristics. It is possible this effect arises from broad cultural differences across countries, but it may also be that specific policies have more direct effects. Identifying such policies will improve our ability to evaluate social policy for its effects on micro-level gender dynamics. That is the empirical question for this study.

5. Hypotheses

We use the multi-level theory of women's power in the analysis of the division of housework. Specifically, we examine if the two aspects of social policies—equality of access and substantive benefits—affect the overall division of household labor and the impact of wives' employment and relative earnings on the division of household labor. Based on previous research, we propose four hypotheses, each of which applies net of controls for couple-level characteristics. The first is on the effects of social policies on countries' average division of housework. Equality of access and substantive benefit policies offer different approaches to gender inequality; however, both indicate some governmental commitment to policies that might mitigate the unequal division of household labor. Thus we hypothesize:

> H_1: Countries with developed equality of access policies (affirmative action and absence of discriminatory policy) and substantive benefit policies (parental leave and public childcare) have a more egalitarian division of household labor on average.

The rest of the hypotheses predict how social policies moderate the association between women's economic resources and the division of housework. Because equality of access policies enhance women's opportunity in the labor market and foster a sense of entitlement to work, they may enhance the effects of women's full-time employment and income. Thus, we hypothesize:

> H_2: In countries with developed equality of access policies (affirmative action and absence of discriminatory policy), women's full-time employment and higher income have a stronger effect on the gender division of household labor.

Hypothesis 3 and 4 address substantive benefit policies—parental leave and childcare policies. Because parental leave policies often encourage women to take time off from employment, the availability of parental leave may reduce the effect of women's resources on a more egalitarian division of housework. We predict:

> H_3: In countries with developed parental leave policies, women's full-time employment and higher income have weaker effects on the gender division of household labor.

In contrast, because public childcare helps mothers' of young children continue working, and provides ideological support to a dual-earner model, this policy may encourage women to use their resources for a more egalitarian division of housework. Thus, we hypothesize:

> H_4: In countries with developed public childcare policies, women's full-time employment and higher income have stronger effects on the gender division of household labor.

6. Data, measures, and models

To test these hypotheses, we use data from the 2002 International Social Survey Program: Family and Changing Gender Roles III. The data reflect a cross-national collaboration in which independent institutions replicate survey questions in their own countries (Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung, 2004). The ISSP 2002 collected data from 34 countries, making it the largest existing cross-national data set on the division of household labor. We use data from Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Flanders (Belgium), France, Germany (East and West), Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovenia, Slovakian Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. We exclude Philippines and Taiwan because they lack information on key variables. Our sample is restricted to married or cohabiting respondents who are at least 18 years old; data was collected from one member of each household. A total of 23,178 respondents are included in our analysis.

6.1. Dependent variable

The division of household labor is measured by the *housework hour ratio* between husband and wife. The ISSP asks: "On average, how many hours a week do you personally spend on household work, not including childcare and leisure time activities?" And then it asks the same question about respondent's spouse. We create a relative housework time variable from responses to these two questions. The variable ranges from −1 (the husband does the all housework in the household) to 1 (the wife does the all housework in the household).[2] A score of 0 indicates that the husband and wife spend equal time on the housework.[3] Respondents who said that they spend more than 70 hours on housework per week are set to 70. Since the demand for housework may affect the division of housework between husband and wife, we also control for *total housework hours* in the household.

6.2. Couple variables

We use wife's full-time job and relative income as the main independent variables. Many previous housework studies have shown that these variables affect the division of household labor (Shelton and John, 1996). In order to measure different effects of wives' full-time employment on the division of housework, we use a dummy variable for *wife full-time*, indicating wife's full time employment status (and also control for *husband's full-time* employment status). Wives' *relative income* is derived from the reported income difference

[2] The ratio is calculated as (wife's housework hours − husband's housework hours)/(wife's housework hours + husband's housework hours).

[3] ISSP also asked the division of specific household tasks in categorical fashion, with responses ranging from "wife always does" to "husband always does," without time estimates, as was done in the previous ISSP survey (Fuwa, 2004). However, an estimate of housework hours is most consistent with previous research (Bianchi et al., 2000; Shelton and John, 1996; South and Spitze, 1994). Thus, this study focuses on the housework hour ratio variable. In separate models for combined tasks, we found similar effects of the social policies, but the effects were weaker. The results are available from the authors upon request.

between a husband and wife, which was scaled from 0 (the wife has no income), 1 (the husband has a much higher income), 2 (the husband has a higher income), 3 (about the same), 4 (the wife has a higher income), 5 (the wife has a much higher income) to 6 (the husband has no income).[4]

We control for a number of known covariates of the gender division of housework. *Gender role ideology* reflects how respondents think about the appropriate roles for men and women, measured by the response to these statements: "A job is all right but what most women really want is home and children," "Being housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay," "A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family," "All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job," and "A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works." The responses range from 0 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree).[5] Higher scores reflect more egalitarian attitudes. We then summed the responses to the five statements and divided them by the number of complete responses to these questions. Cronbach's alpha for this index is 0.73. A similar index is used in previous housework studies (Batalova and Cohen, 2002; Fuwa, 2004).

We control for *age* of respondents in years and *age squared* because a non-linear relationship between age and the division of household labor is found in previous research (Batalova and Cohen, 2002; Fuwa, 2004; South and Spitze, 1994). A *College* dummy variable indicates that the respondent has a four-year college degree. We also control for the presence of a child and the number of children in the household, because previous research finds that as the number of children increases, the housework division tends to become more traditional (South and Spitze, 1994). As non-marital cohabitation has been shown to lead to a more egalitarian division of housework (Batalova and Cohen, 2002), we control for *cohabitation*, with those currently cohabiting coded 1 and those who are married coded 0. Finally, because we include data from both male and female respondents, but only one respondent per couple, we control for the gender of the respondent with a dummy variable indicating *male*, to capture possible bias in reporting by either men or women (Kamo, 2000).

Table 1 shows couple-level descriptive statistics for all 33 countries. Wives are reported to spend 21.4 h on housework per week, compared to 8.1 h per week for husbands. Thus, women are reported to perform 72.5% of total housework hours for the sample. On other variables, 38% of wives and 68% of husbands have a full-time job. The mean relative income between husband and wife is 2.01, indicating that husbands have a higher income than their wives.

6.3. Social policy variables

Social policies on women's employment are distinguished by the "equality of access" and "substantive benefits" framework (Chang, 2000). Policies based on "equality of access" logic are measured by the level of implementation of affirmative action and absence of gender discriminatory policy in the labor market (prohibiting women night work, jobs involving heavy loads, or working underground). Chang's original index also

[4] Ireland, Denmark, and Australia do not report the category 0 or 6. In those cases we use the respondents' and the spouses' employment status data to complete the scale.

[5] Because the US data is missing 0 (strongly agree) and 4 (strongly disagree), we also tested the gender role ideology scale, which ranges from 0 (agree) to 2 (disagree). The results are substantively the same.

Table 1
Individual level descriptive statistics

Variable	Means	SD	Min.	Max.
Housework ratio	0.45	0.39	−1	1
Wife's housework hour	21.42	15.51	0	70
Husband's housework hour	8.10	9.79	0	70
Wife's full-time employment	0.38	0.49	0	1
Relative income	2.01	1.44	0	6
Gender ideology	1.96	0.90	0	4
Male	0.46	0.50	0	1
Husband works full-time	0.68	0.47	0	1
Age	46.66	14.40	18	96
College	0.17	0.37	0	1
Household with a child	0.50	0.50	0	1
Number of children	0.94	1.18	0	13
Cohabitation	0.08	0.27	0	1

included ratification of ILO Convention 111, which prohibits discrimination in employment and occupations, and ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CDEAW). However, since almost all countries in the sample have ratified these treaties, they are not used in this study. Instead we use specific policy indicators. Affirmative action policy (AA) is a dummy variable indicating the absence or presence of a program that gives women preferential treatment (setting of quota, target, or goal) in hiring and promotion. The information on affirmative action policy in women's employment and promotion in the labor market is collected from the CEDAW country reports on each country's progress toward gender equality in social, economic, political, and cultural areas.[6] The absence of discriminatory policy (AD) is measured by whether a country upholds the discriminatory treaty that prohibits women working a night shift (ILO Convention 89), underground (ILO Convention 45), and sex differentiating restriction on heavy loads (ILO Convention 127).[7] The absence of discriminatory policy ranges from 0 (all the discriminatory treaties are present) to 3 (none of the discriminatory treaties are present).

"Substantive benefits" policies are measured by the level of implementation of maternal and parental leave (PL) and public childcare provision (CC) for 0–2 years old and for 3–6 years old. Parental leave policy is measured by the length of the parental leave, ranging from 2.8 months (Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, the United States) to 42.3 months (Slovakia).[8] We rescale this variable so that the country with shortest parental leave has the value of 0 and the country with longest leave has the value of 1. We calculate childcare provision

[6] CEDAW requires ratified countries to submit a report on their state and progress regarding gender equality every four years, which includes information on affirmative action. We analyzed the most recent available country reports with supplemental information from Bacchi (1996, 1999); Chalude et al. (1994); Chang (2000); O'Connor et al. (1999) and Peters (1999). CEDAW country reports are available from http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reports.htm.

[7] The absence of discriminatory policy reflects states' ratification of ILO 89, 45, and 127 as of January 2001.

[8] Ideally, we would have measures of wage coverage and take-up rates for parental leave policies, but this information is not systematically available across a wide selection of countries.

from estimates of public childcare availability for children age 0 to 2, and age 3 to compulsory school age. Detailed estimates are available for public childcare availability for children age 3 to compulsory school age, ranging from 32% (Cyprus) to 105% (Israel).[9] For children under three years of age we use an ordinal scale similar to that created by Petrie et al. (2003), which groups countries from low (less than 10%) to medium (10 to 25%) and high (more than 25%).[10] We scale each of these factors from 0 for the country with the lowest level of provision to 1 for the country with the highest level of provision, and average the two scores to create our public childcare variable. Cyprus has the lowest score (0), and Flanders (Belgium) has the highest (0.96).

6.4. Statistical models

Hierarchical linear models enable us to conduct multi-level analysis of the division of housework using couple-level and county-level variables simultaneously, and including tests for cross-level interactions between state policies on women's employment and the effects of individual women's assets on the division of housework in their homes. The models essentially estimate couple-level and country-level models simultaneously, allowing for separate error terms, and thus correct estimation of standard errors at both levels. Our method is similar to that used by Fuwa (2004) and Batalova and Cohen (2002) for the previous wave of ISSP housework data.

The individual-level model is

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}X_{ij} + \beta_{2j}X_{ij} + \Sigma\beta_{kj}X_{ikj} + r_{ij},$$

where Y_{ij} is a division of housework for couple i in country j, β_{0j} is the level-1 intercept, β_{1j} is the effect of women's full-time employment, β_{2j} is the effect of relative income (women's higher income), $\beta_{jk}X$ is the slopes for k control variables X, and r_{ij} is the level-l error term.

The country-level model is:

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(\mathrm{AA}j) + \gamma_{02}(\mathrm{AD}_j) + \gamma_{03}(\mathrm{CC}_j) + \gamma_{04}(\mathrm{PL}_j) + U_{0j},$$
$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}(\mathrm{AA}_j) + \gamma_{12}(\mathrm{AD}_j) + \gamma_{13}(\mathrm{CC}_j) + \gamma_{14}(\mathrm{PL}_j) + U_{1j},$$
$$\beta_{2j} = \gamma_{20} + \gamma_{21}(\mathrm{AA}_j) + \gamma_{22}(\mathrm{AD}_j) + \gamma_{23}(\mathrm{CC}_j) + \gamma_{24}(\mathrm{PL}_j) + U_{2j},$$
$$\beta_{kj} = \gamma_k,$$

[9] Public childcare gross enrollment rate for children age 3 or older is 2000 data, except for Ireland, where 2000 data is not available. The 1990 data is used instead. Russia's data include a very small portion of private childcare provision. For New Zealand, only total gross enrollment rate (public and private) is available for the 2000 data. The percent of 1990 public provision in the total gross enrollment is used to estimate the 2000 public childcare provision. Northern Ireland is given the score of Great Britain for all the social policy variables. Data sources: Gornick and Meyers (2003), UNESCO (2005) calculated from Statistical Annex Table 3 and 11.

[10] The childcare for children under 3 years of age data indicates the level of availability in publicly funded services (Petrie et al., 2003). The closest available data to the survey year (2002) are used. A few countries—Bulgaria, Mexico, New Zealand, and Switzerland—that lack the information are given the average score of the sample. Data sources: CEDAW country reports (2005), Central Bureau of Statistics (2004), Council of the European Union 7069/04 (2004), Eurydice Data base on Education (2003), Fordor (2004), Gornick and Meyers (2003); Heymann et al. (2004); Kamerman (2000), Dombrovsky (2004), OECD (2001), Petrie et al. (2003); Saxonberg and Siroatka (2004); Teplova (2004), UNESCO (2005).

where γ_{00} is the intercept for level-2, γ_{01} is the effect of AA on the model intercept (β_{0j}), γ_{10} is the country-level intercept for the women's full-time employment slope, γ_{11} is the effect of AA on β_{1j}, γ_{20} is the country-level intercept for relative income slope, γ_{21} is the effect of AA on β_{2j}, ..., U_{0-2j} is the country-level error terms, assumed to be normally distributed with mean zero and variance σ^2.

All individual level and country level variables are centered on their grand means; the intercept indicates the housework ratio for couples with average characteristics in a country with average characteristics in the sample.

7. Results

Country-level descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2. On average, the housework hour ratio between husband and wife is most equal in Latvia (0.25); Japan has the most traditional division of household labor (0.79). Consistent with previous cross-national studies (Batalova and Cohen, 2002; Geist, 2005), women perform more than half of the housework across all countries.

Liberal countries such as Australia and the United States, and Scandinavian countries such as Norway and Sweden, have implemented affirmative action policy on women's employment and promotion. However, the countries differ in the strength of measures taken and in their attitudes toward affirmative action. Germany uses a quota-like preferential treatment policy in hiring and promoting women in the public sector. Although Australia has implemented one of the most widespread affirmative action plans in the private sector, the Australian government also insists on the principle of equal opportunity and merit in the recruitment processes. (We tested Australia coded as both with and without Affirmative action. The results are substantively the same.)

In contrast, none of the former socialist countries in the sample have affirmative action policies. These governments express critical views of affirmative action policies. Slovakia states in its 1998 CEDAW country report: "The equal position of men and women is guaranteed by the Constitution and is reflected in all the laws regulating the political, economical, social and cultural sphere. Slovakia did not need to implement temporary and special measures in order to accelerate the establishment of equal position of women and men" (Slovakia Country Report [Addendum], 1998, p. 14). However, all of these former socialist countries except Latvia retain at least one piece of sex discriminatory policy that exclude women from night work, underground jobs or jobs that involve lifting heavy objects. For example, Bulgaria labor codes retain "'Special protection of women,' which regulates the prohibition of some kinds of work by women that are damaging to their health and maternity functions" (Bulgaria Country Report, 1994).

The length of maternity and/or parental leave varies widely by country. Liberal countries such as the United States and New Zealand, as well as Israel and Mexico, have the shortest parental leave (12 weeks). In contrast, Slovakia provides as long as a 3.6 years of parental leave. Most former socialist countries have a parental leave until the child reaches three years old. However, as in Russian case, some of the leaves are restricted to mothers; fathers are allowed to take parental leave only with mothers' written permission (Teplova, 2004). In its pro-natal policy, France also has expanded the parental leave during the last decade. Conservative countries such as Austria, Germany, and Spain also have long parental leave policy.

Table 2
Country-level descriptive statistics

Country	*N*	Wife's housework hours	Husband's housework hours	Housework hour ratio[a]	Affirmative action	Absence of Discriminatory policy[b]	Parent leave (months)	Public childcare[c]
Latvia	507	18.4	11.1	0.25	No	3	3.7	0.43
Poland	708	20.7	12.2	0.26	No	1	27.7	0.10
Slovakian Republic	688	22.3	12.1	0.30	No	1	42.3	0.58
Denmark	823	13.1	7.0	0.30	No	3	12.0	0.90
Australia	738	21.5	11.5	0.30	Yes	3	12.0	0.03
Russia	713	26.6	14.2	0.30	No	2	24.4	0.38
Sweden	668	14.1	7.3	0.32	Yes	3	20.0	0.84
USA	574	13.2	6.6	0.33	Yes	3	2.8	0.14
Mexico	734	28.5	14.3	0.33	No	2	2.8	0.40
Finland	760	13.1	6.3	0.35	No	3	36.0	0.48
Czech Republic	729	23.0	10.9	0.36	No	1	36.0	0.40
Bulgaria	579	23.7	11.1	0.36	No	1	36.0	0.39
Great Britain	979	14.2	6.5	0.37	No	3	7.1	0.31
E Germany	252	18.0	7.8	0.39	Yes	2	36.0	0.81
Flanders	739	23.5	9.7	0.42	Yes	2	15.4	0.96
New Zealand	601	15.4	6.3	0.42	No	3	2.8	0.32
Hungary	566	27.8	11.2	0.43	No	1	36.0	0.30
Norway	951	11.6	4.6	0.43	Yes	3	12.0	0.56
Slovenia	693	21.8	7.7	0.48	No	1	12.0	0.64
Netherlands	498	17.0	6.0	0.48	Yes	3	9.7	0.39
Israel	725	17.3	6.0	0.48	Yes	3	2.8	0.75
West Germany	509	21.2	7.3	0.49	Yes	2	36.0	0.31
France	1019	12.4	4.1	0.50	No	1	37.3	0.83
Switzerland	488	21.0	6.6	0.52	No	1	3.7	0.52
Northern Ireland	399	16.6	5.2	0.52	No	3	15.6	0.31
Austria	1068	22.1	6.8	0.53	No	1	27.7	0.36

(*continued on next page*)

Table 2 (*continued*)

Country	*N*	Wife's housework hours	Husband's housework hours	Housework hour ratio[a]	Affirmative action	Absence of Discriminatory policy[b]	Parent leave (months)	Public childcare[c]
Brazil	846	34.9	10.5	0.54	No	0	3.9	0.09
Ireland	643	31.4	8.9	0.56	Yes	3	7.4	0.19
Chile	787	37.2	9.9	0.58	No	2	4.1	0.07
Spain	1322	29.5	7.3	0.60	No	1	36.0	0.24
Cyprus	515	17.8	4.4	0.61	No	1	3.7	0.00
Portugal	623	25.4	6.1	0.61	No	1	30.0	0.14
Japan	734	25.9	3.0	0.79	No	2	15.2	0.01

Data sources: Affirmative action policy: Bacchi (1996, 1999); CEDAW country reports (2005); Chalude et al. (1994); Chang (2000); O'Connor et al. (1999); Peters (1999). Absence of discriminatory policy: ILO conventions (International Labour Organization, 2005b). Data as of January 2001. Public childcare for children age under 3: CEDAW country reports (2005), Central Bureau of Statistics (2004), Council of the European Union 7069/04 (2004), Eurydice Data base on Education (2003), Fordor (2004), Gornick and Meyers (2003); Heymann et al. (2004), Kamerman (2000), Dombrovsky (2004), OECD (2001), Petrie et al. (2003), Saxonberg and Siroatka (2004), Teplova (2004); UNESCO (2005). Public childcare for children age 3 or older: Gornick and Meyers (2003) UNESCO (2005) calculated from Statistical Annex Table 3 and 11. Parental leave policies: OECD, 2001, Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child (2005).

[a] The housework hour ratio ranges from −1 when the husband does the all housework to 1 when the wife does the all housework.

[b] Absence of discriminatory policy ranges from 0 when all the discriminatory treaties are present to 3 when none are present.

[c] Public childcare is created by adding the score for public childcare for under 3 years old (0–1) and 3 or older (0–1) and dividing by 2.

In general, Scandinavian countries show high public childcare availability, since in these countries services are mostly provided by government. Liberal countries such as Australia and the United States have low rates in public childcare since private childcare is dominant in these countries. Most former socialist countries, except Poland, still have relatively high public childcare rates after the collapse of the socialist regimes.

Table 3 presents the results of four hierarchical linear models. An ANOVA model is included as model 1 to examine overall individual-level and country-level variance. The intercept shows that the average division of housework is 0.45. This means that wives spend almost three times as many hours on housework as their husbands across the 33 countries. The intraclass-correlation results indicate that between-country variance constitutes about 8.1% of the overall variance in the division of housework.[11] The between-country variance on the intercept is statistically significant (Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002).

In Model 2, we add the two main individual-level variables—wife's full-time job and relative income between husband and wife. The coefficients for these variables are allowed to vary across countries to examine if their effects on the housework hour ratio are significantly different across countries. The variance components show that there is significant difference in the effects of the wife's full-time employment and the relative income by country. Wife's employment has a significant equalizing effect on the housework hour ratio ($-.12$, $p < .001$). Similarly, wife's higher relative income has a negative effect on the housework hour ratio ($-.041$, $p < .001$). These variables explain 23.8% of the variance in country-level intercepts (.0126 versus .0096) and 6.7% of the individual-level variance (.1436 versus .1340). Thus, about one-quarter of the variation in the gender division of housework across countries is accounted for by the cross-national variation in wives' labor force participation and relative earnings.

In Model 3, we add all couple-level control variables. Again, the coefficients for wife's full-time employment and relative income variables are allowed to vary across countries, and they are not substantially changed. All the control variables have significant effects on couple's division of household labor. The total number of hours spent on housework has an equalizing effect on the housework distribution; the increased demand for housework may encourage husbands' participation in the household labor. Age is associated with a more traditional division of housework until the inflection point at age 61.1, where couples' housework division becomes more egalitarian. Consistent with previous studies (Kamo, 2000), male respondents report greater contributions for men (or female respondents report lower contributions for men). The effects of control variables do not change significantly in the final model. After controlling for couple's characteristics, cross-national difference in the effects of women's employment and relative income remains significant.

Model 4 is the final model, which includes the four social policies on the intercept and on the slopes of the two couple-level variables. The absence of discriminatory policy has negative effects on the intercept ($-.053$, $p < .001$) as does parental leave policy ($-.059$, $p < .1$). That is, the division of housework is more egalitarian by .053 or 12%, for each aspect of discriminatory labor policy not present. Similarly, couples in a country with generous parental leave policy have a more egalitarian division of housework by $-.059$, or 13.6%. However, affirmative action policy and public childcare do not have a significant

[11] Intraclass correlation $(T_{00}/[\sigma + T_{00}] \times 100) = .0126/[.0126 + .1436] \times 100 = 8.1\%$.

Table 3
Hierarchical linear model results for individual and country level effects on housework hour ratio between husband and wife

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	0.446***	0.441***	0.443***	0.443***
	(.019)	(.0.17)	(.016)	(.014)
Affirmative action	—	—	—	.028
				(.028)
Absence of discriminatory policy	—	—	—	−.053***
				(.012)
Parental leave	—	—	—	−.059+
				(.031)
Public childcare	—			−.052
				(.062)
Wife full-time job				
Intercept	—	−.120***	−.137 ***	−.138***
		(.013)	(.010)	(.009)
Affirmative action	—	—	—	−.032+
				(.017)
Absence of discriminatory policy	—	—	—	.013
				(.010)
Parental leave	—	—	—	.081*
				(.030)
Public childcare	—	—	—	−.003
				(.037)
Relative income				
Intercept	—	−.041***	−.035***	−.036***
		(.004)	(.003)	(.003)
Affirmative action	—	—	—	.009
				(.008)
Absence of discriminatory policy	—	—	—	−.006*
				(.003)
Parental leave	—	—	—	−.002
				(.006)
Public childcare	—	—	—	.007
				(.012)
Husband full-time	—	—	.109***	.108***
			(.011)	(.011)
Cohabitation	—	—	−.066**	−.066***
			(.013)	(.013)
Number of children	—	—	.009*	.009*
			(.003)	(.003)
Presence of children	—	—	.028**	.027**
			(.008)	(.008)
Age	—	—	.008***	.008***
			(.001)	(.001)
Age squared	—	—	−.0001***	−.0001***
			(.0000)	(.0000)
College	—	—	−.059***	−.058***
			(.008)	(.008)
Total housework hours	—	—	−.002***	−.002***
			(.0003)	(.0003)
Male	—	—	−.120***	−.120***
Gender Ideology	—	—	−.036***	−.036***
			(.004)	(.004)

Table 3 (*continued*)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Variance Components				
Intercept	.0126***	.0096***	.0086***	.0075***
Wife full-time job slope		.0044***	.0026***	.0022***
Relative income slope		.0005***	.0003***	.0003***
Level-1	.1436	.1340	.1255	.1255

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.
+ $p < .1$. (two-tailed tests).

effect on the average housework ratio between men and women. Thus, with regard to hypothesis 1, our prediction is partially supported.

For the women's full-time employment slope, the results show that hypothesis 2 and 3 are partially supported. For couples' in a country with affirmative action, the effect of wives' full-time employment is larger by .032 ($p < .1$). In other words, in countries with affirmative action, the equalizing effect of wives' employment on housework is stronger. Consistent with hypothesis 3, long parental leave weakens the equalizing effect of wives' full-time employment (.081, $p < .05$). The effects of discriminatory policy and public childcare are not statistically significant.

For the relative income variable, only discriminatory policy has a significant moderating effect. Supporting hypothesis 2, in countries without discriminatory policy, the equalizing effect of wives' higher income is stronger. The other three social policies do not have a significant moderating effect. Interestingly, public childcare provision does not have significant effects either on the intercept, wife's full-time job slope, or relative income slope. We also tested the childcare provision policy for children age 0–2 and for children age 3 or older separately, but the results are similar. Hypothesis 4 is not confirmed.

The variance components show that adding social policies to the model reduces the between-country variance on the intercept by 12.8% (from .0086 to .0075). The between-country variance for the wife's full-time job is reduced by 14.5% (from .0026 to .0022) while the variance for relative income is not changed. It seems that the social policy variables better explain variance across countries in the effect of wives' full-time employment than they do the effect of relative income.

8. Conclusion and discussion

Using Chang's (2000) concept of social policy on women's employment—equality of access and substantive benefit policies—this study analyzed social policy effects on the division of household labor in 33 countries. We hypothesized that countries with developed equality of access (affirmative action and absence of discriminatory policy) and substantive benefit policies (parental leave and public childcare) have a more egalitarian division of housework on average. The hypothesis is supported with regard to discriminatory policy and parental leave policy, but not for affirmative action and public childcare.

With regard to the moderating effects of social policies on the association between women's assets and the division of housework, we find that the effect of women's full-time

employment on housework is stronger in countries with affirmative action policies, and weaker in those with a longer parental leave policy. The effect of women's higher relative income is stronger in countries without discriminatory policy. However, childcare policy does not have a significant effect on the efficacy of either wives' full-time employment or relative income.

Our results suggest that social policies intended to reduce gender inequality and work-family conflicts can have equalizing effects on the division of household labor between men and women. Thus, removing discriminatory policy and implementing parental leave policies may be conducive to realizing a more equal division of housework, regardless of women's individual characteristics. However, these social policies have different effects on the association between women's individual assets and the division of household labor. On the one hand, equality of access policy brings additional leverage for wives with full-time jobs, perhaps by increasing the value of their employment to their families. On the other hand, parental leave policy may actually weaken the housework bargaining power women get from full-time employment, by helping to maintain women's primary role as mothers even when they are employed.

These findings suggest that those advocating policies to reduce the conflict between work and family responsibility need to be careful not to reinforce traditional gender norms. The introduction of a "father's quota" may be the first step, but the reduction of gender wage differences also may be necessary to encourage fathers to take greater advantage of available leave. Also, we note that although equality of access policies help women to realize a more equal division of housework, these equality of access policies do not address problems of gender-biased expectations in the work environment (Gornick and Meyers, 2003). Instead of accepting standards where workers are presumed to be without family responsibilities, future social policies should challenge these norms to create work environments that are more compatible with family life.

This study helps take research on the gender division of household labor further beyond its focus on the balance of individual assets as the determinant of couple dynamics. A broader context of gender inequality is an important factor for both the overall division of housework (Batalova and Cohen, 2002) and for realizing the efficacy of women's assets in the negotiations between husbands and wives (Fuwa, 2004). However, we have shown that state policies regarding gender inequality and work-family conflict may affect both of these outcomes as well. In so doing, we hope to increase attention among researchers and policymakers to the ways that social policy in these areas shapes the context not only for publicly visible forms of gender inequality such as workplace discrimination, but also for the more intimate negotiations in households, where gender inequality is reproduced.

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