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Is it Fair to Share?

Perceptions of fairness in the division of
housework among couples in 22 countries

Ida Öun

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between the actual division of housework and men's and women's perceived fairness in this regard. The central question is how the actual sharing of housework influences the perceptions of fairness in the division of housework. It is hypothesized that the perceptions of fairness differ between policy models. In countries where gender equality has been more present on the political agenda and dual-earner policies have been introduced, people are expected to be more sensitive to an unfair sharing or division of housework. By analysing the relationship between actual division of housework and perceptions of fairness in household work for 22 countries representing different family policy models, the study takes on a comparative perspective with the purpose of analysing the normative impact of policy. The analysis draws on data from the 2002 round of the International Social Survey Programme on family and changing gender roles. The results show that in countries that have promoted gender equality through the introduction of policies with an aim to promote dual roles in work and family, both women and men are more sensitive to an unfair division of household labour. The difference between perceptions in the different policy models is greater among men than among women, indicating that a politicization of the dual-earner family is more important for men's equity perceptions than women's.

Key words: division of labour, fairness, family policy, gender, household work

Introduction

In recent decades, women's labour force participation has increased drastically in most welfare states. The two-income family has gained ground at the expense of the more traditional family form with a male breadwinner and female homemaker. There is no doubt that the dual-earner trend has paved the way for increased gender equality in the public sphere, although differences between countries exist. On the other hand, it seems like continuity reigns more strongly in the domestic sphere. Even if men today have taken on more of the household work and childcare than in the past (Brines 1994; Hook 2006), it is largely still considered a female domain and most couples demonstrate continuing inequality in the distribution of household work. According to recent research, the gendered division of housework does not vary markedly across policy regimes (Baxter 1997; Ellingsæter and Leira 2006; Stier and Lewin-Epstein 2007), but there is evidence that national context is somewhat influential on the division of housework in families. Men do a larger share of the household work in countries where women's labour force participation and general economic and political power is greater (Hook 2006; Fuwa 2004; Davis and Greenstein 2004). On the individual level there are differences between families especially depending on educational level of spouses (Nilsson and Strandh 2006). If highly educated, women are more likely to be member of a dual earner household, and to a larger extent share household work with their partner (Daly, 2005).

The central argument of this article however, is that the perception of inequalities in the division of housework is not only dependent on the actual amount or share of housework performed, but is related to other factors pertaining to normative expectations about gendered roles and relations among women and men – factors that have been shown to vary between family policy models. Recent research indicates that among women perceptions of fairness with regard to household work tend to vary between national social contexts. Perceptions of fairness in household work among men have to my knowledge not been studied in a country-comparative perspective before. This article addresses this issue by exploring the relationship between the actual division of housework and men's and women's perceived fairness in this regard in 22 countries representing five different family policy models. The central question that the article aims to answer is how the *actual sharing* of housework influences the *perceptions of fairness* in the division of housework among men and women in different policy contexts. What role does policy play for the relationship between actual practice in the division of household work on the one hand, and subjective perceptions of fairness relative to one's partner of the performed housework on the other? In line with results from the few previous studies of

women's perceptions that exist, it is hypothesized that the effect of the actual division of household work on perceptions of fairness differs between policy models. Policy is put forward as a moderating factor between actual practices and perceptions of fairness in household work. In social contexts where gender equality has been more present on the political agenda and dual-earner policies have been introduced, I expect to find a more widespread injustice sensitivity; that is to say men and women are expected to be more sensitive to an unfair division of housework. Is real imbalance between the partners perceived as more unfair in countries which have focused more on gender equality through the introduction of dual earner policies? Do gender differences in perceived fairness vary between policy models? And do possible patterns match with existing classifications of welfare and gender regimes?

In short, in contrast to previous comparative research in the field, this study also examines men's perceptions of fairness in the division of household work in different social contexts, relative to women's perceptions. And as the forthcoming analyses will show, this is a major contribution to our understanding of the relationship between policy and perceptions of fairness in the division of housework. In addition, the study theorizes and systematically examines perceptions of fairness in the division of housework in relation to the construct of family policy models. Finally, it tries to capture the impact of normative messages and expectations around household work and gender relations conveyed through policy arrangements, as an explanatory factor.

Perceptions of fairness in household work

Many studies have demonstrated gender inequalities in the actual division of housework and proposed various explanations thereof. Three different factors prevail in the explanations of the imbalanced division of household labour: time availability, relative resources, and gender ideology (for a review, see Mikula 1998). Less research has focused on the *perceptions* of the division of household labour. Notwithstanding the clear and consistent evidence of gender inequality in the division of household labour, a large majority of respondents do not regard the division as unjust, due to factors concerning normative expectations about gendered roles and relations among women and men. If individuals expect the wife to perform more housework than the husband, they are more likely to see their division of household work as fair if their own share of housework meets this expectation, and less likely to see this division of household work as fair if it does not. A general finding in previous research is that women perform approximately two-thirds of all household work, but that much fewer, about 20-30%, regard it as unfair (Mikula 1998), a ratio that holds for both

employed and unemployed women. For men the figures are even lower, though fewer studies exist.

Previous non-comparative research in the area of perceived fairness in household division of labour partly use similar explanatory models as research that focuses on gender inequalities in actual division of housework (e.g. Baxter 2000; Blair and Johnson 1992; DeMaris and Longmore 1996; Lennon and Rosenfield 1994; for a review, see Mikula 1998). That is to say, time availability, resource dependence in the household, and gender ideology on the individual level. When it comes to time availability it has been shown that women compare their own situation with men's longer hours in paid work. If women perform less hours of work in paid labour compared to their partners, they perceive higher fairness in the division of housework even if they do a majority of it. Regarding resource dependence, high dependence of one's partner, both economically and with regard to power, lead to higher perceptions of fairness. More traditional attitudes towards gender equality also lead to higher perceptions of fairness. A common finding in relation to such normative or ideological explanations is that alternative arrangements that share household labour more equally are either not perceived as achievable, or even as not more attractive (Mikula 1998).

Another important explanatory framework in the area takes as its point of departure theories of distributive justice (e.g. Nordenmark and Nyman 2003; Gager 1998; Gager and Hohmann-Marriot 2006; for a review, see Mikula 1998). In this framework, differing perceptions of fairness and entitlement among men and women are assumed to depend upon three major factors: outcome values, comparison referents, and justifications. With respect to outcome values, women's disproportionate share of household work is seen both negatively, in terms of a lack of time and energy, and positively, at least symbolically, by confirming women's identity and creating a harmonious home. When it comes to comparison referents, studies show that perceptions of fairness depend on whom the respondents compare themselves to. Women tend not to compare themselves to their partners, but rather to other women, and men compare themselves to other men, such as their fathers (Mikula 1998). Finally, although part of a general pattern, unequal sharing of household work is often justified by individual women and men as depending on coincidental factors or processes explaining and legitimizing their and their partner's actions.

As discussed in the introduction, the question of perceived fairness in the division of household labour in different socio-political contexts has been examined to some extent in previous research. A handful of studies have taken on a country comparative perspective (Braun et al. 2008; Davis 2010; Ruppanner 2008), finding that quite varying dimensions of country contextual variation matter for women's perceived fairness in the division of household work, such as female labour market participation, the gender

wage ratio, women's political representation, and former socialist political history. All contextual factors included in previous research relate to and try to capture the general political and social standing of women in their respective societies. In general, the findings are that in countries that have promoted gender equality, women are more sensitive to unfairness in household division of labour and hence perceive less equity compared to women in other countries.

One common trend in previous nation-specific research (without a country comparative approach) in this area is that they have mostly directed their attention to a specific population of women, namely married or cohabiting women's perceptions of fairness in the division of household labour; far fewer studies have also included married or cohabiting men. To my knowledge, previous comparative research analysing the perceptions of fairness in the division of housework have exclusively studied women's perceptions. In my opinion, the non-interest in studying both men's and women's perception of fairness seems odd if one wants to examine whether and how the policy context matters for perceptions of fairness. It is well known that women traditionally do more household work than men, but as discussed in the introduction, the policy context matters for the division of housework in families. It should also be emphasized that excluding men from the analysis implies that men's behaviour and perceptions are not related to the socio-political context that surrounds them and that their share of housework performed is unchangeable. Comparisons between men's and women's perceptions of fairness are therefore a central focus of this analysis and an important contribution to the field.

Family policy and the politicization of gender equality

As described in the introduction, the aim of this article is to examine the relationship between the actual division of household work and men's and women's perceived fairness in the household work, in different family policy models. The central theoretical idea is that the policy framework surrounding citizens in a given context is of substantial importance for structuring individuals' behaviours, preferences, and perceptions (Daly and Rake 2003; Mettler and Soss 2004; Svallfors 2007; Soss and Schram 2007). In the context of this article, family policy arrangements are assumed to make up a framework that define and influence the expectations, ideals, roles, and relations of women and men, which in turn are of importance for individuals' perception of society and everyday life. As transmitters of resources and carriers of norms, policy arrangements can be looked upon as a filter that delineates opportunities and through which individuals perceive the world.

Welfare state institutions in general, and in the context of the present article family policy arrangements in particular, can influence individuals' behaviour, preferences, and perceptions in different ways. Policy arrangements are important for the formation of individuals' material positions and their worldviews, as well as the link between the two. First, policy arrangements (re)distribute resources and entitlements affecting individuals' opportunities and capacities and providing incentives to bring about certain behaviours. Behaviour, preferences, and perceptions are moulded in the context of public policies through their definition of eligibility, costs, and benefits (Svallfors 2007).

Second, and, as I will argue below, of central importance for the current analysis, policy arrangements can be normative. Policies embody norms and values about what is considered proper behaviour for men and women, and convey normative messages about gender roles and gender equality that influence how people act, think, and feel when it comes to the sharing of household work. Policies provide information about who should take the main responsibility for paid and unpaid work and to what extent certain kinds of behaviour are tolerated or perceived as deviant or unfair.

Moreover, by framing societal agendas and public debates, policy sensitizes citizens to present public concerns and affect whether social phenomena are seen as political rather than private matters (Daly and Rake 2003; Mettler and Soss 2004; Svallfors 2007). The normative messages conveyed by policies can also have mobilising or pacifying effects (cf. Mettler and Soss 2004). If the societal messages about appropriate behaviours and responsibilities for men and women concerning the division of household work in general do not correspond to the everyday experiences and expectations of individual men and women, there is a hypothetically greater likelihood of interpreting the sharing of household work as unfair.

Accordingly, family policy arrangements are not only relevant for understanding the formation of actual division of household work between partners in different contexts (Hook 2006; Fuwa 2004). Such arrangements are also important for how the sharing of housework is perceived. Policy is thus seen as a moderating factor between behaviour and perceptions regarding the sharing of household work, and it is hypothesized that the perceptions of fairness differ between policy models.

In countries where gender equality has been more present on the political agenda and dual-earner policies have been introduced, men and women are expected to be more sensitive to an unequal sharing compared with men and women living in a context where gender equality is less debated in the public sphere. Policies expressing a dual-earner/dual-carer ideal may raise expectations that the household work should be equally shared between the partners, both among women and men. Thus, women and men in countries with such policies may react more strongly if their ideals and expectations

are not met. Also, this individualist, gender-neutral ideal may collide with a reality where gender and family still matter. Even in dual-earner countries, women carry a large responsibility for household work and may thus be more sensitive to an unfair division of housework.

To examine whether family policy arrangements are connected to the perceptions of the sharing of household work, the impact of policies that facilitate or hamper the development of dual-earner/dual-carer families is of particular interest. Such policies capture a central dimension of gender equality in modern societies as they to a large extent define the conditions of women's labour force participation, and thus their autonomy and economic independence. Autonomy affects women's life choices by increasing their power within the family as well as their capacity to form an autonomous household (Orloff 1993). Korpi (2000) provides an exhaustive classification of family policies on a national level that can be used when comparing a larger set of countries. Korpi has examined 18 OECD countries according to their level of support for either dual-earner families or male-breadwinner families and found three policy models: *the dual-earner model*, *the traditional family model*, and *the market model*. The classification is two-dimensional and distinguishes between policy structures that support women's paid work and those that encourage a traditional family model with a female homemaker. The first dimension is captured with an index measuring public day-care services for children under three years, full-time public day-care services for children aged three and over, and, finally, generosity in the provision of earnings-related parental insurance. The second index measures the provision of cash child allowances, public day-care services dominated by part-time services for children aged three and over, care allowances for the care of small children in the home, and marriage subsidies via tax benefits for families with children with only one economic provider. Countries with high scores on the first dimension and low scores on the second have been classified as dual-earner countries while countries with high scores on the second dimension and low on the first are labelled traditional countries. Countries with low scores on both indexes – countries largely lacking public support for childcare – are classified as belonging to a market model, since childcare is provided mainly by markets and kin.

The Eastern European and Mediterranean countries in the data have not been classified by Korpi. Still, I have included them in the analysis for explorative reasons and treated them as two separate groups. Even though family policy schemes vary considerably among the Eastern European countries, a common characteristic is the provision of long maternity leaves and low provision of care services, emphasizing private-based care by mothers until the child is three years old (Neyer 2006; Saxonberg & Sirovatka 2006; Robila 2012). Additionally, in the Mediterranean countries, family-based care is the norm with the influence of Catholicism and the idea

of subsidiarity being central features (Ferrera 1996, 2005). Assistance to families is generally limited, the traditional family plays a prominent role, and the provision of care services is low (Bettio & Plantenga 2004). Recent work by Thévenon (2011) largely confirms Korpi's family policy models and expands the analysis to also include more Southern and Eastern European countries. Thévenon's analysis distinguishes between two principal components, where the first includes support for working parents with children under age three to enable them to combine work and childcare. The second component includes long but not well-compensated periods of leave and investment in educational services for somewhat older preschool children. According to Thévenon, five country clusters can be identified but they all contain some heterogeneity. These clusters are similar to the ones described above and confirm the description of the Eastern and Southern European policy models.

The family policy models are used as an analytical tool to examine the impact of policy for the relationship between actual division of housework and the perceptions of fairness in the division of housework, with a special interest in the dual-earner model. The analytical strategy is as follows. As an introduction, I consider the country distributions of the perceptions of fairness in the division of household work. The analysis is then performed in two steps. First, I examine how the relationship between the actual sharing of housework and perceived fairness in the division of housework looks for men and women in different family policy models, using multi-level regressions (described below). Second, I attempt to explain and understand the process behind the impact of family policy model in the first analytical step, by conducting separate regressions for the 22 countries, where each country's mean effect of actual share of housework on perceived fairness in the household work (taking control variables into account) are estimated and related to gender-equality norms in the countries.

Methods and data

The data used in this article come from the 2002 module of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) on family and changing gender roles. The ISSP is a cross-national collaboration in which attitude surveys on various issues of interest for social science research are carried out. The aim is to create data sets that are comparable across countries and nationally representative of the adult populations. The source questionnaire is translated into the national languages. The surveys are carried out once a year, each time with the aim of analysing attitudes in relation to a specific topic (e.g., the role of government, social inequality, religion, environment, national identity). The 2002 survey was carried out in 37 countries around the world, 22 of which are included in the analysis in this article. In this

article, a sub-sample (N = 18,963) comprising married or cohabiting men and women is analysed (45% men and 55% women). (For further description of the data, see www.issp.org.) The countries included in the analyses are: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, France, Belgiumⁱ, the United Kingdom, the United States, Ireland, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Slovakia, and Poland.

The dependent variable in focus is the respondents' perceived fairness in household work, measured by the question: Which of the following best applies to the sharing of household work between you and your spouse/partner? (scale 1-5: I do much less than my fair share of the household work; I do a bit less than my fair share of the household work; I do roughly my fair share of the household work; I do a bit more than my fair share of the household work; I do much more than my fair share of the household work). In the first descriptive section in the results section, this variable is used in this original format. However, because the variable runs in two directions and the point of equal sharing is in the middle of the scale, it is difficult to use in its original format in the following regression analysis. In the analytical section, a recoded variant of the perceived fairness variable is used that contains three levels, where the highest level means that the respondent sees the division of household work as fair.ⁱⁱ The middle level indicates that the respondent or partner perceives that he or she does a bit less than his or her fair share of the household work, and the lowest level means that the respondent or partner perceives that he or she does much less than his or her fair share.ⁱⁱⁱ

The main independent variable on the individual level is the actual division of household work between the respondent and his or her partner. It has been argued in previous research that the best way of capturing this is to use a variable measuring men's involvement in traditionally female-typed tasks (Blair and Johnson 1992; DeMaris and Longmore 1996; Lennon and Rosenfield 1994). In this article, a variant of such a measure is used in form of an additive index that takes into consideration which member of a couple usually does six common household chores. The index is constructed out of the following question: In your household who does the following things...? a) Does the laundry, b) Makes small repairs around the house, c) Cares for sick family members, d) Shops for groceries, e) Does the household cleaning, f) Prepares the meals. Possible answers were: always me; usually me; about equal or both together; usually my spouse/partner; is done by a third person. The index ranges from 0 to 100 where higher values indicate that the chores are shared more equally.^{iv} If a household task is not performed mainly by any of the partners, but done by a third person, it has been added to the category of equal sharing. To overcome the possible shortcoming that time investment for the different household tasks is not captured by this measure,

the total hours of household work performed by both partners are included as a control variable in this analysis. In some previous studies, the actual division of household work is instead captured by a measure of relative time investment by the respondent/woman (e.g. Braun et al. 2008). Such a measure has also been tested in this study, with similar results as those presented below.

The aim of the article includes comparing perceptions of fairness in the division of housework among women and men in different contexts. Therefore, gender is also a central independent variable at the individual level in the study. The ISSP 2002 questionnaire contains no information on the sex of the partner. Thus, I have assumed that the partners are of opposite sex.

The main independent variable on the national level is family policy model. Using Korpi's (2000) classification of countries according to their level of support for either dual-earner families or male-breadwinner families as a point of departure, and with the extension by the Mediterranean model and the Eastern European countries supported by Thévenon (2011), five policy clusters have been created: 1. The dual-earner model, 2. The traditional family model, 3. The market model, 4. Mediterranean countries, and 5. Eastern European countries. Countries with high scores on the first dimension (dual-earner support) and low scores on the second dimension (male-breadwinner support) have been categorized as dual-earner countries (here: Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark). Countries with high scores on the second dimension and low on the first are labelled traditional countries (here: Germany, Austria, France, Belgium (Flanders), and the Netherlands). Countries with low scores on both indexes – countries largely lacking public support for childcare – are classified as belonging to a market model, since childcare is provided mainly by markets and kin (here: the UK, the US, Ireland, and Switzerland^v). The analysis also includes two Mediterranean countries (Spain and Portugal) and six Eastern European countries (Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Slovakia, and Poland).

A number of variables pertaining to common key explanations for perceptions of fairness in the household division of labour are included as control variables in the analysis. To capture the time availability dimension, the respondents' work hours have been combined with that of the partner into a categorical variable describing seven household types: 1) both full time (≥ 35 hours), 2) respondent full time/partner long part time (20-34 hours), 3) respondent full time/partner working 0-19 hours, 4) respondent long part time/partner full time, 5) respondent 0-19 hours/partner full time, 6) both long part time and, 7) both 0-19 hours.

Resource dependence is captured by a measure of the respondent's income in relation to partner's income (scale 1-7, where 1 means total

independence (partner has no income) and 7 meaning total dependence (respondent has no income)). The presence of children in the household is also included as a control variable as the amount of household work needed to be done in a household increases drastically with the presence of children. Finally, since previous studies in the field have shown that couples with higher education to a larger extent share the household work, a dichotomous variable is included that takes into account whether the respondent has a university degree or not. Gender ideology has been omitted from the analysis as this is used as an explanatory macro-level factor at a later stage (see below). ISSP 2002 contains no indicators that would measure factors relating to the theory of distributive justice (outcome values, comparison referents, and justifications), which excludes the possibility to integrate this dimension in the analysis.

The independent variables in focus in the first analytical step are actual share of performed household work and gender on the individual level and family policy models operationalized per Korpi et al. at the contextual level. An interaction term based on these three independent variables is created and tested to answer the question of whether policy is a moderating factor for the relationship between the actual sharing of housework and men's and women's perceived fairness in the division of housework. Because the variables of interest are measured at both national and individual levels, multilevel analysis (MLA) is a suitable regression method. Since it can be argued that country characteristics are contextual variables – that is, individuals within one country are more similar than individuals in different countries – this method is more appropriate than the traditional ordinary least square (OLS) regression method, which assumes observations to be independent (Hox, 2002). This, therefore, gives a more reliable estimation of the effects of country differences in policies than most previous research, which commonly uses the OLS regression method (for an exception, see Braun et al., 2008). For pedagogical reasons and due to space limitations, the results from the MLA regression are presented as figures.

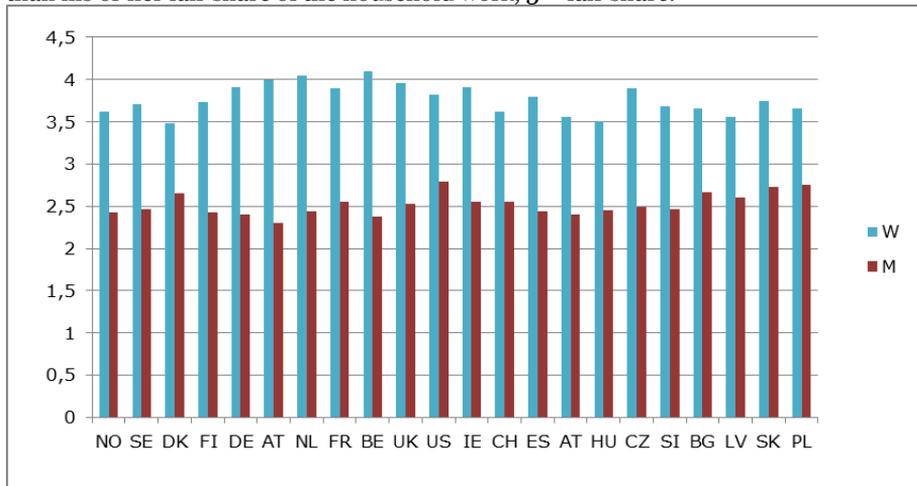
The central variable in the second analytical step, where each country's mean effect of actual share of housework on perceived fairness in the household work (with controls) are estimated and related to gender equality norms in the countries, consists of an index of attitudes towards gender equality on aggregated level i.e. the country means (scale 0-100, where a higher value indicates a more positive societal gender equality ideal). The gender equality index (alpha 0.77; mean 55.27; standard deviation 7.48) was constructed with the help of five items measuring the respondents' attitudes towards women's participation in paid work: A working mother can establish just as warm and secure relationship with her children as a mother who does not work; A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works; All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job; A job is all

right, but what most women really want is a home and children; A man's job is to earn money, while a woman's job is to look after the home and family. (Response categories: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree.) The questions correspond to items v4 (reversed), v5, v6, v7, and v11 in the ISSP 2002 source questionnaire. The results of the second analytical step are presented as plots separated by gender.

Results

Figure 1 presents the levels of perceived fairness in the division of household work among women and men in 22 countries. The countries are ordered according to family policy model. Across all family policy models, women report that they do more than their fair share of the household work, while men report that they do less than their fair share.

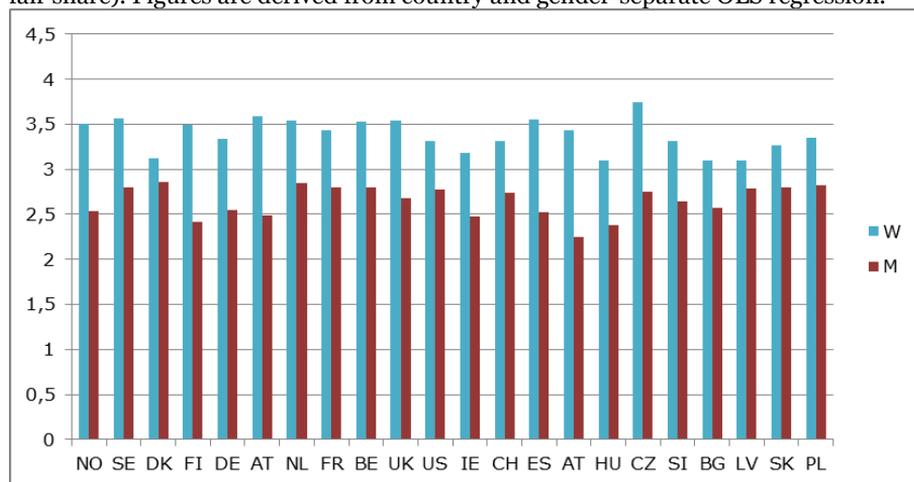
Figure 1. Perceived fairness in the division of household work among women and men in 22 countries. Scale 1-5: high values signify that the respondent does more than his or her fair share of the household work, 3 = fair share.



Source: ISSP 2002.

In line with the nationally focussed research mentioned previously, levels of reported unfairness decrease when control variables are included in the analysis and, as a consequence, the gender differences in perceived fairness are also reduced. On the other hand, cross-country variation seems to increase, but not according to any obvious family policy model pattern (Figure 2).

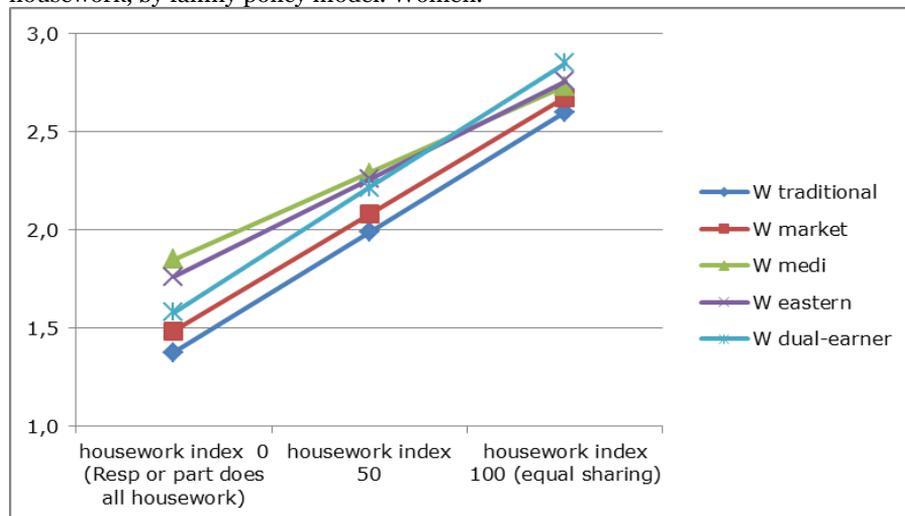
Figure 2. Perceived fairness in the division of household work among women and men when control variables are included (actual share of housework performed, household type (respondent's and partner's working time), relative income, presence of children, and total hours of housework in household). Scale 1-5: high values signify that the respondent does more than his or her fair share of the household work, 3 = fair share). Figures are derived from country and gender-separate OLS regression.



Source: ISSP 2002.

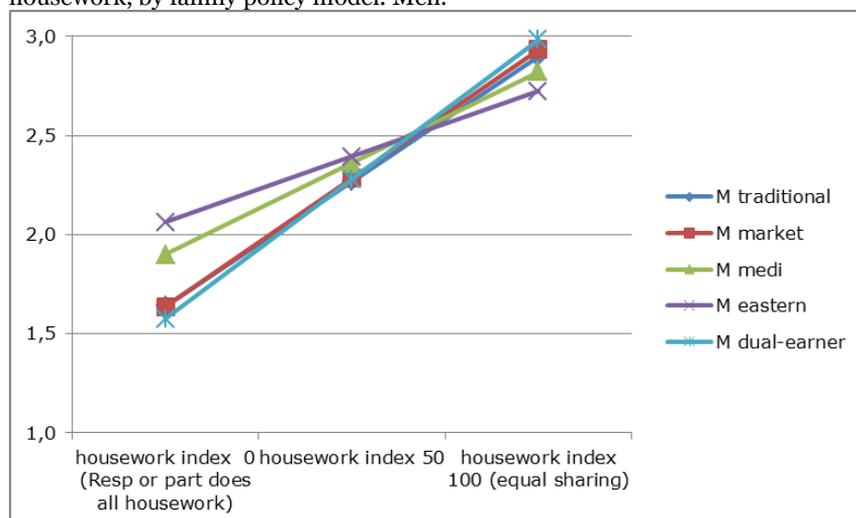
To examine the variation according to policy model and gender, a three-way interaction term between (a) actual share of housework performed, (b) family policy model, and (c) gender was created and tested in a MLA regression with the perceived fairness in the division of household labour as the dependent variable. Control variables were also included.^{vi} The results from this MLA regression shows that the interaction term is statistically significant, meaning that there is evidence that the relationship between actual share of performed housework and the perceived fairness in the housework differs between policy models, but also that the effect of policy is different for women and men. The main results from the MLA regression are presented in Figures 3 and 4. The figures show the predicted values for perceived fairness for different levels of actual share of housework performed, by family policy model and gender. As described above, the housework index ranges from 0 to 100 where higher values indicate that the household work is shared more equally between the partners. The full regression model is presented in the appendix (Table A1).

Figure 3. Predicted values of perceived fairness in the division of household work derived from MLA regression, according to different levels of actual share of housework, by family policy model. Women.



Source: ISSP 2002.

Figure 4. Predicted values of perceived fairness in the division of household work derived from MLA regression, according to different levels of actual share of housework, by family policy model. Men.



Source: ISSP 2002.

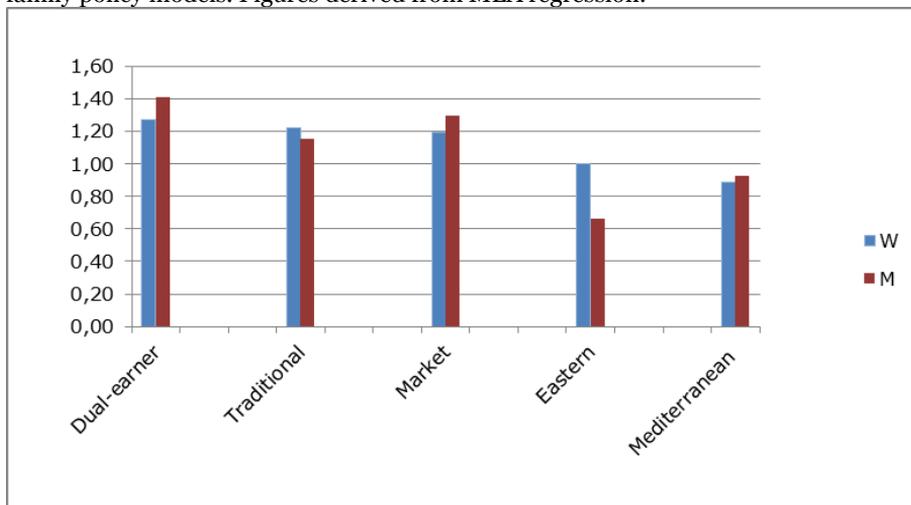
The results from Figure 3 (women) and Figure 4 (men) show a general pattern that the more equally shared the housework by a couple, the higher the perception of fairness in the division of housework. However, this

pattern seems to vary by family policy model and gender. As to the policy aspect, it was hypothesized that in contexts where gender equality has been more present on the political agenda and dual-earner policies have been introduced, people are expected to be more sensitive to an unfair division of housework. This hypothesis seems to find support in the multi-level regression. The figures show that the effect of actual sharing of housework on the perceived fairness in household work differs between family policy models, with the effect being highest in the dual-earner model, closely followed by the market model and the traditional model, with the effect being lower in Eastern European and Mediterranean countries. In these countries, the tolerance towards inequality seems to be higher since the perceived fairness in the division of housework is relatively high, especially among men, at a very unequal level of sharing of the household work (housework index=0), while women and men in the three other family policy models score lower in perceived fairness.

In the main, when it comes to gender, the result is that policy context seems to have a stronger effect among men than among women. More or less the same contextual pattern is demonstrated in Figures 3 and 4, but is much more marked among men. This can indicate that women, irrespective of policy context, are more rooted in actual circumstances in their perceptions of fairness in the household work. For men, there seems to be an important cleavage between policy models when it comes to the effect of actual share of housework on perceived fairness, which runs between the North/West and the South/East, with the effect being significantly weaker in the South/East.

It is interesting to note is that in all family policy models, the predicted values of perceived fairness are in general lower for women than for men even on the highest value of the housework index. This means that women evaluate their contribution of household work as larger than fair even when the value on the variable measuring the actual share of performed housework is “equal sharing” between the partners. My interpretation of this result is that there is a slight mismatch between the indicators measuring perceived fairness and actual share of performed housework, as the former does not specify the chores included in the concept of housework while the latter does. Obviously, the respondents may think of other chores than the ones specified in the questionnaire when they evaluate the global division of housework as fair or unfair. Another plausible explanation could be that the general perception or norm that women have the primary responsibility for home and children (and also do more housework) influences the conception of fairness, even when the chores are divided equally.

Figure 5. Distance between value on perceived fairness when the value on the housework index is 0 and when the value is 100 for women and men in the different family policy models. Figures derived from MLA regression.

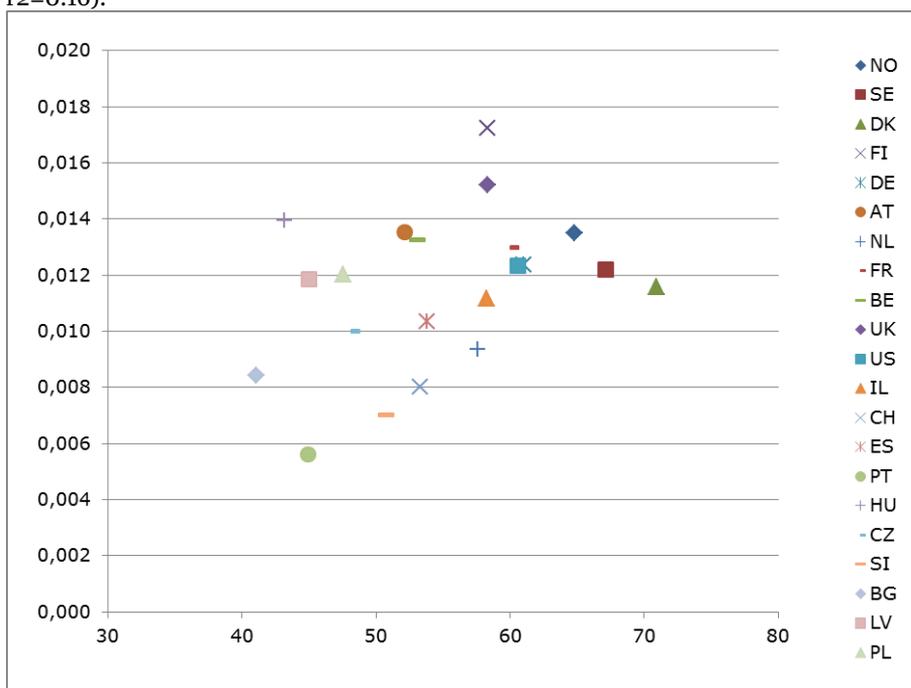


Source: ISSP 2002.

The results in Figure 5 are also derived from the multi-level regression and show the differences between the value of perceived fairness for men and women in the five family policy models when the household work is divided totally unequally between the respondent and his or her partner (housework index value = 0), and when the housework is equally shared by the couple (housework index value = 100). The figure clearly illustrates the pattern of gender and policy model variation discussed above, with the variation between family policy models being more marked among men, along with an especially sharp divide between North/West and South/East. What can also be seen here is that the distance is greatest among men in dual-earner countries. I see these results as an indication that the introduction of family policies has an impact on the relation between actual share of performed housework and perceived fairness in the division of housework. The effect is high both among men and women in the dual-earner model, supporting the hypothesis that dual earner policies supporting a more gender-equal society leads to higher injustice sensitiveness when it comes to the sharing of household work. Interestingly though, similar patterns are also found in the traditional and market models, not least among men. Even though the predicted values of perceived fairness were generally higher for men than for women, as was shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4, the distances for women and men is not the same in all family policy models. The smallest gender divide are found in the Mediterranean and traditional models, closely followed by the market and dual-earner models. The greatest male-female divide in

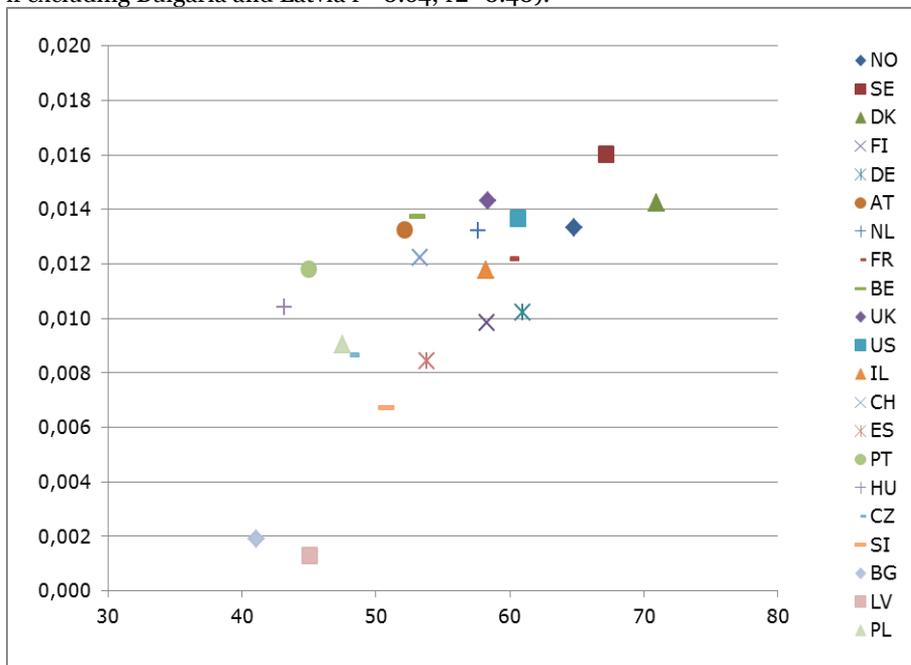
perceptions of fairness according to actual share of housework performed is found in the Eastern European model. In this model women are in general more sensitive to unfairness and men's perceptions of fairness are in fact rather loosely based on the actual division of household work. Perhaps this is a result of the historical political heritage of these countries, characterised by a strong double standard of equality as ideology when it comes to the public and private spheres; during the communist era men and women participated nearly equally in the labour force, but the division of labour in the households was very traditional (Pascall and Lewis 2004).

Figure 6. The effect of actual share of household work on perceived fairness (Y-axis) by degree of prevalent gender-equality norms (X-axis). Women. ($r = 0.40$; $r^2 = 0.16$).



Source: ISSP 2002.

Figure 7. The effect of actual share of household work on perceived fairness (Y-axis) by degree of prevalent gender-equality norms (X-axis). Men. ($r= 0.71$; $r^2=0.50$; if excluding Bulgaria and Latvia $r= 0.64$; $r^2=0.40$).



Source: ISSP 2002.

The next step of the analysis is an attempt to explain the patterns found with regard to gender and policy variation in the perceived fairness in the household division of labour. As discussed above, policy is seen here as a moderating factor between behaviour and perceptions regarding the sharing of household work, above all through its normative side. The standard-setting power of policy as an explanatory factor will thus be explored below. The degree of gender equality norms prevalent in the countries – that is the dominant normative framework concerning gender roles, ideals, and expectations – is measured by an index of attitudes towards gender equality on an aggregated level (i.e., the country means). Even though the attitudes included in the index were first measured on the individual level, the aggregated version captures the general view on gender equality in the countries (in line with the saying “Many a little makes a mickle”) and mirrors manifestations of the normative messages conveyed by policies (cf. Page and Shapiro 1993; Brooks and Manza 2007).

This index is plotted against the countries’ mean effects of actual share of housework on perceived fairness in the household work, for men and women

separately. The countries' mean effects (taking control variables into consideration) were estimated through 44 separate regressions – one for each country and gender. Figures 6 and 7 show the results of the analysis.

In these figures, the countries are ordered according to family policy model, and the figures show that the measure of gender equality norms reveals a similar result as the multi-level regression above, which gives support for the idea about gender equality norms as an explanatory factor behind policy variation in perceived fairness in the household division of labour.^{vii} The effect of actual share of household work on perceived fairness varies by the degree of prevalent gender equality norms in the countries – the higher the degree of gender-equality norms, the higher the effect of actual share of household work performed on the perceived fairness in the housework. This pattern is obvious both for men and women, although it is much stronger for men. Similarly, there is a very clear divide between the North/West and the South/East, while for women the results are more mixed. In both Figure 6 and especially Figure 7, the relationship is heavily influenced by the Eastern-European countries and for men also by the Mediterranean countries. Differences between the other policy models appear to be rather small.

Overall, the results indicate that perceptions of fairness in the division of household work are not universal, but rather are moderated by the institutional and normative context surrounding individuals. The politicization of gender equality increases the correspondence between actual share of housework performed and the perceptions of fairness in the division of housework, especially among men.

Concluding discussion

The aim of this article was to analyse how the actual sharing of housework influences the perceptions of fairness in the division of housework among men and women in different policy contexts. Twenty-two countries, representing five different family policy models, were included in the analysis and it was hypothesized that the effect of the actual division of household work on perceptions of fairness would be moderated by the family policy context. In contexts where gender equality has been more present on the political agenda and dual-earner policies have been introduced, I expected women and men to be more intolerant of inequality.

The empirical results largely supported this hypothesis. A general pattern that a more equally divided housework also raises the perception of fairness in the division of housework was shown. However, this pattern varied by family policy model. In contexts with policies that promote gender equality, people were more sensitive to an unfair division of housework and the effect of the actual sharing of housework on the perceived fairness in household

work differed between family policy models, being highest in the dual-earner model, closely followed by the market model and the traditional model. In the main, the effect was lower in the Eastern European countries and the Mediterranean countries.

Possible gender differences were also a central aspect of the analysis. And in contrast to previous comparative research in the field, this study examined men's perceptions of fairness in the division of household work in different social contexts, in comparison to women's perceptions. For both women and men, the results were in line with results from the few previous studies of women's perceptions that exist. However by also including men in the analysis an important part of the picture appeared that was previously completely missing, namely that the contextual effect is stronger and more distinct among men. This focus on both genders de-emphasizes the narrow study of women (implicitly assuming the static nature of men's behaviour) in an issue that traditionally has been considered a female domain. This then contributes to a more nuanced understanding of gender relations in the household and the role of policy on these relations.

The division of household work is undoubtedly a question of justice, and feelings of justice among individuals are certainly one factor that can determine how the household work is divided. If they perceive the actual division of housework as unfair, changes in the traditional division of labour should be easier to produce. The effect of the politicization of gender equality being more important for men's perceptions than for women's indicates that articulation of gender equality and the introduction of dual-earner policies have the potential to encourage a growing awareness of inequity, especially among those who "benefit" from an unjust situation. An interesting result in relation to this is that, even though the highest level of intolerance to an unequal sharing of the household work was found in the dual-earner model, very similar results were shown for the traditional and market models, not least among men. This may indicate that perceptions of male and female roles and relations with regard to unpaid and paid work are about to erode.

Appendix

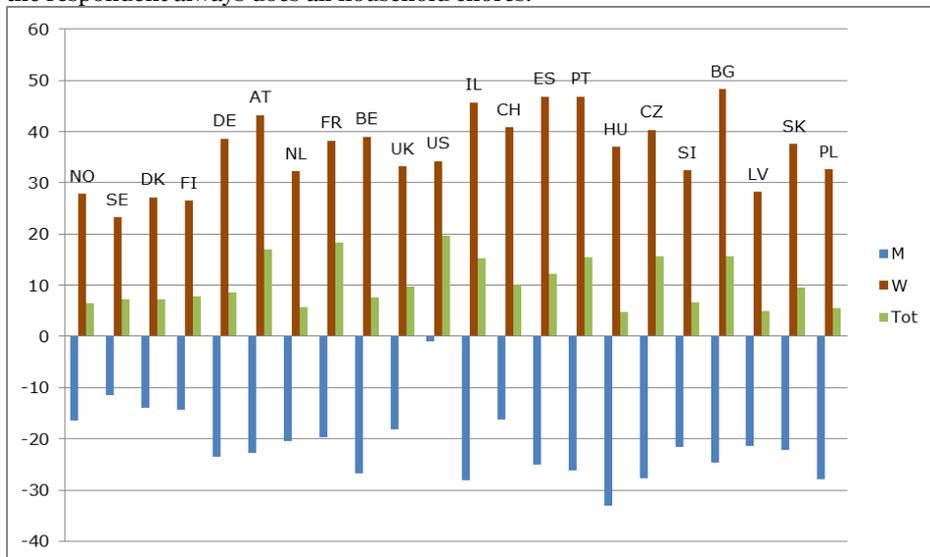
Table A1. Full model of MLA regression. Dependent variable: Perceived fairness in household work.

Significance tests of fixed effects	F
Intercept	2116,837***
Share of housework (A)	1598,442***
Gender (B)	21,582***
Household type	2,664*
Relative income	10,868**
Children	3,411*
Total hours housework/week	23,035***
Education	3,138
Family policy model (C)	13,446***
A * B	0,001
A * C	15,549***
B * C	4,406**
A * B * C	3,269*

Estimates of fixed effects	B
Intercept	1,502134***
Share of housework	0,014093***
Woman (Ref: man)	0,008700
<i>Household type</i> (Ref: both full time)	
Both 0-19h	0,043559*
Both 20-35h	-0,020691
R 0-19h/P full time	0,049863*
R 20-34h/P full time	-0,000100
R full time/P 0-19h	-0,012477
R full time/P 20-34h	0,049737
Relative income	0,015790**
<i>Children</i> (Ref: no children)	
0-6 years	-0,031142
7-18 years	-0,035602*
Total hours housework/week	0,001686***
Education lower than university (Ref: University degree)	-,030064
<i>Family policy model</i> (Ref: dual-earner)	
Traditional	0,063369
Market	0,061546

Mediterranean	0,324411**
Eastern Europe	0,487670***
<i>Interaction terms</i>	
A * B (Woman)	-,001406
A * B (Man)	
A * C (Traditional)	-0,001486
A * C (Market)	-0,001106
A * C (Mediterranean)	-0,004851**
A * C (Eastern Europe)	-0,007482***
A * C (Dual-earner)	
B (Woman) * C (Traditional)	-0,267816**
B (Woman) * C (Market)	-0,156827
B (Woman) * C (Mediterranean)	-0,056217
B (Woman) * C (Eastern Europe)	-0,308174**
B (Woman) * C (Dual-earner)	
B (Man) * C (Traditional)	
B (Man) * C (Market)	
B (Man) * C (Mediterranean)	
B (Man) * C (Eastern Europe)	
B (Man) * C (Dual-earner)	
A * B (Woman) * C (Traditional)	0,001033
A * B (Woman) * C (Market)	0,000317
A * B (Woman) * C (Mediterranean)	0,000998
A * B (Woman) * C (Eastern Europe)	0,004772**
A * B (Woman) * C (Dual-earner)	
A * Man * C (Traditional)	
A * Man * C (Market)	
A * Man * C (Mediterranean)	
A * Man * C (Eastern Europe)	
A * Man * C (Dual-earner)	

Figure A1. Share of housework performed reported by male and female respondents. Measure based on 6 common household chores. Range -100 to +100 (-100 = the partner always does all household chores; 0 = equal sharing; and +100 = the respondent always does all household chores).



Source: ISSP 2002.

Notes

ⁱ Only the Dutch speaking part of Belgium (Flanders) participates in the ISSP.

ⁱⁱ Some would argue that a proper way of analyzing tricotomic variables would be logistic regression. However, recently there has been a discussion about problems and limitations with logistic regression and therefore I have chosen not to use this form of regression (see Hellevik 2009; Mood 2010).

ⁱⁱⁱ I have analysed the data using a categorical variant of the perceived fairness variable to see if the results differ according to whether the respondent perceives that he or she does more or less than his or her fair share of the household work. The results from that test shows that the perceptions of fairness are similar independent of which of the partners performs more or less than their fair share. Hence I chose to use the three level variant as a continuous variable.

^{iv} Country means for a modified version of the above described housework index are shown in the appendix, Figure A1. The modified index ranges from -100, meaning that the partner always does all household chores, via 0 which stands for equal sharing, to +100 meaning that the respondent always does all the household chores. The bars in this figure thus distinguish between the share of housework performed as reported by male and female respondents.

^v Recently, Korpi et al. (forthcoming) renewed their analysis of family policy with more recent data, including a third dimension, namely support for fathers' involvement in the care of their young children. Most countries are classified in the same way in this updated version, with Switzerland being the only country that has changed from the traditional family model to the market model. In the present article, Switzerland is classified in the market model in accordance with Korpi et al. (forthcoming).

^{vi} The inclusion or exclusion of control variables does not change the overall results much. The effects of the single control variables are in most cases in line with previous research. See Table A1 for more details.

^{vii} For reasons of validity, I have also tested other contextual variables measuring more general dimensions of women's emancipation compared to my policy measures. Among these measures were 1) the Gender Equality Index which has been created by the UNDP to capture differences in the distribution of achievements between women and men in relation to the labour market, societal empowerment, and reproductive health (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/gii/>), and 2) OECD figures concerning the countries' maternal employment ratio (including women with a child under 15), (OECD Family Database: <http://www.oecd.org/els/socialpoliciesanddata/oecdfamilydatabase.htm>). As

explanatory factors, both these measures perform much worse than the gender-equality norms measure. Among men, the patterns are similar to those of the gender-norms index but the relationships are much weaker, and among women the relationship was close to zero in both cases.

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