

Who should do the housework?

Evidence from a factorial survey on the attitude towards sharing domestic labor in Germany

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Contribution

- Analysis of the attitude towards housework sharing
 - ✓ Differences in attitudes between women and men
 - ✓ Differences in attitudes between various couple contexts
- Application of the factorial survey method to measure attitudes towards housework sharing
 - ✓ Direct measurement of attitudes without interpretation

Background

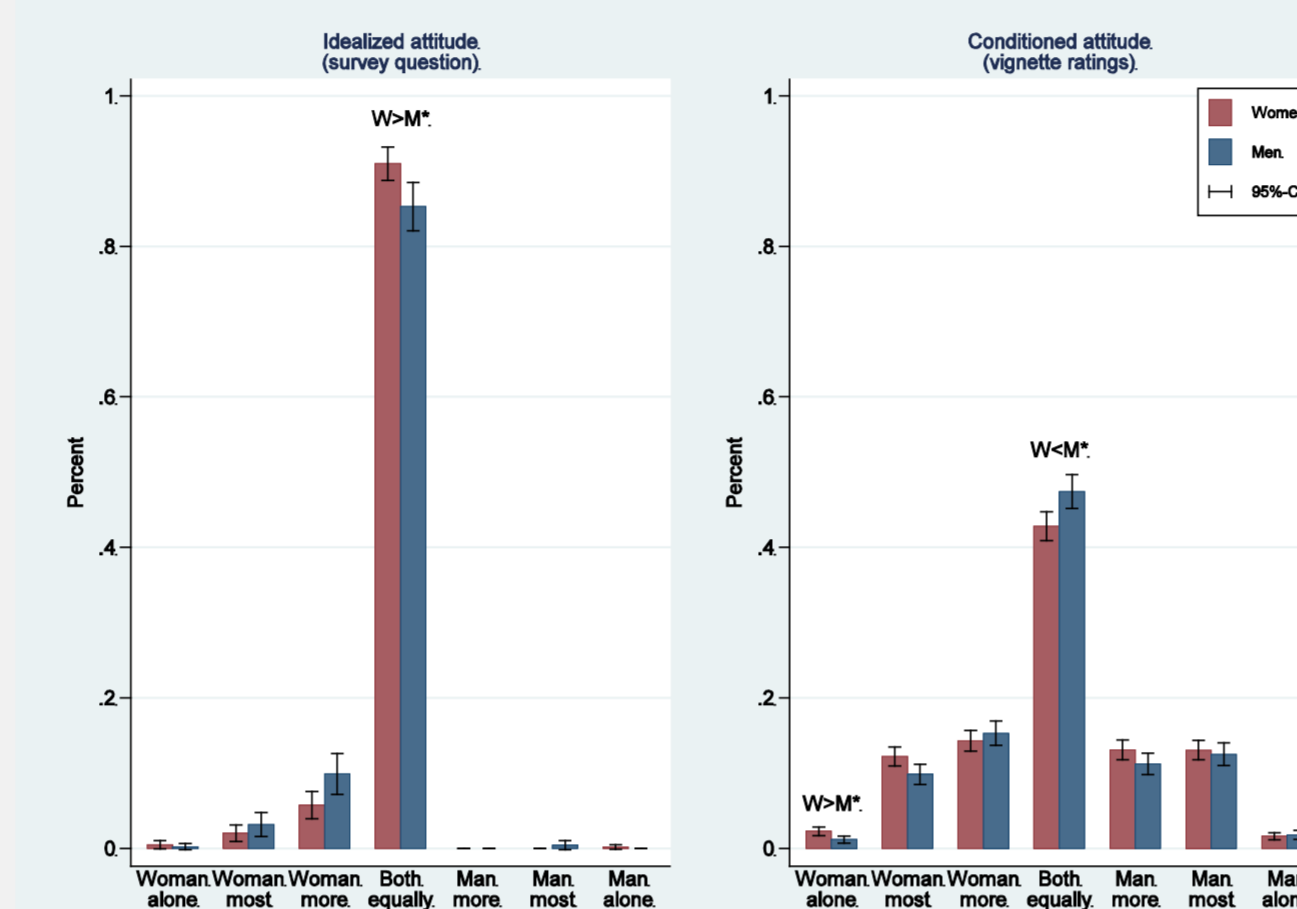
- The gendered division of household labor has been one of the most consistent empirical regularities observed in the social sciences for decades
 - Women do about two thirds of routine housework
 - But: obvious gender inequality in housework participation is not perceived as unfair to wives as expected.
- Gender ideology
 - Growing acceptance of the gender egalitarian model in basically all western societies over the last decades and over cohorts
 - *Hypothesis*: Egalitarian baseline rate of normative judgment of housework division that should be slightly more pronounced for women than for men
- Exchange
 - Power: Material dependency, less power or few alternatives lower expectations for justice regarding gender inequality in housework.
 - Equity: Across all relevant domains in a couple's exchange relationship, women and men perceive equity if their outcomes balance their inputs
 - *Hypothesis*: Relatively higher employment or income resources of women or men shift the attitudes towards greater involvement of the other gender in a couple; similar resources evoke attitudes of equal housework sharing

Conclusions

- Modal attitude of women and men: Gender egalitarianism
- Importance of situations: attitude differentials due to couple characteristics
- Importance of resources for attitude formation: fundamental association between couples' relative employment and attitude towards housework sharing (in line with equity, power, and time availability approaches)
- Only marginal gender differences in the attitude towards housework sharing

Results

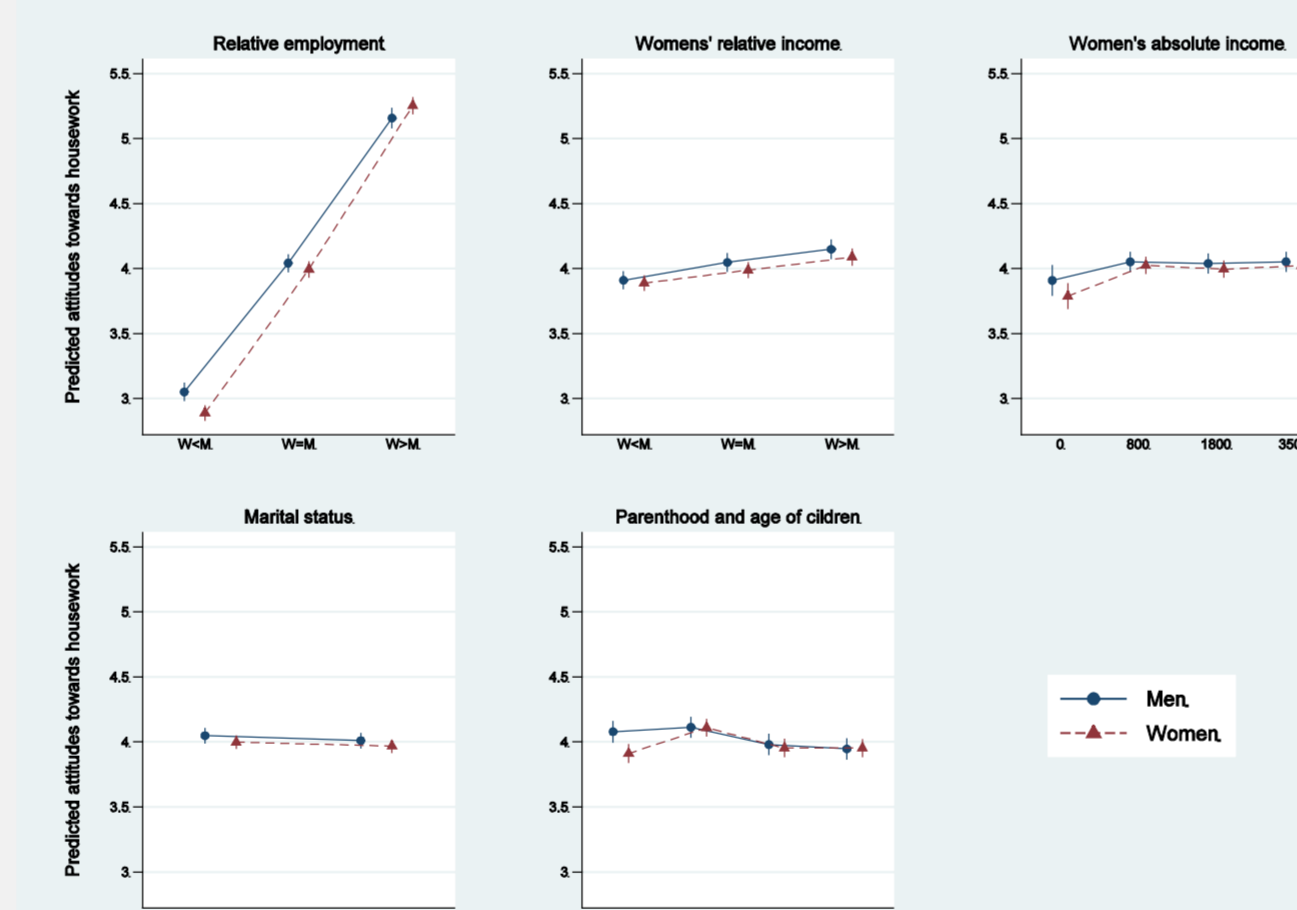
Figure 1. Idealized and conditioned attitude towards housework sharing



Note: Means and 95% confidence intervals. The idealized attitude is based on a direct survey question; 1111 respondents (640 women, 471 men). The conditioned attitude is based on all vignette ratings; these are conditioned on different couple situations; 1119 respondents (644 women, 476 men), 4445 vignette ratings (2356 of women, 1889 of men).

- Idealized attitude:
 - Based on survey question: "Concluding with a question about your general point of view, who should do the housework in couples?"
 - Women (91%) and men (85%) express an egalitarian attitude of housework sharing (sign. diff.)
 - Minor relevance of other possible arrangements
- Conditioned attitude:
 - Based on vignette ratings
 - Equal sharing model dominates attitudes
 - Couple situations matter: higher relevance of unequal arrangements
 - Only minimal gender differences:
 - "Women alone": women > men
 - "Both equally": men > women

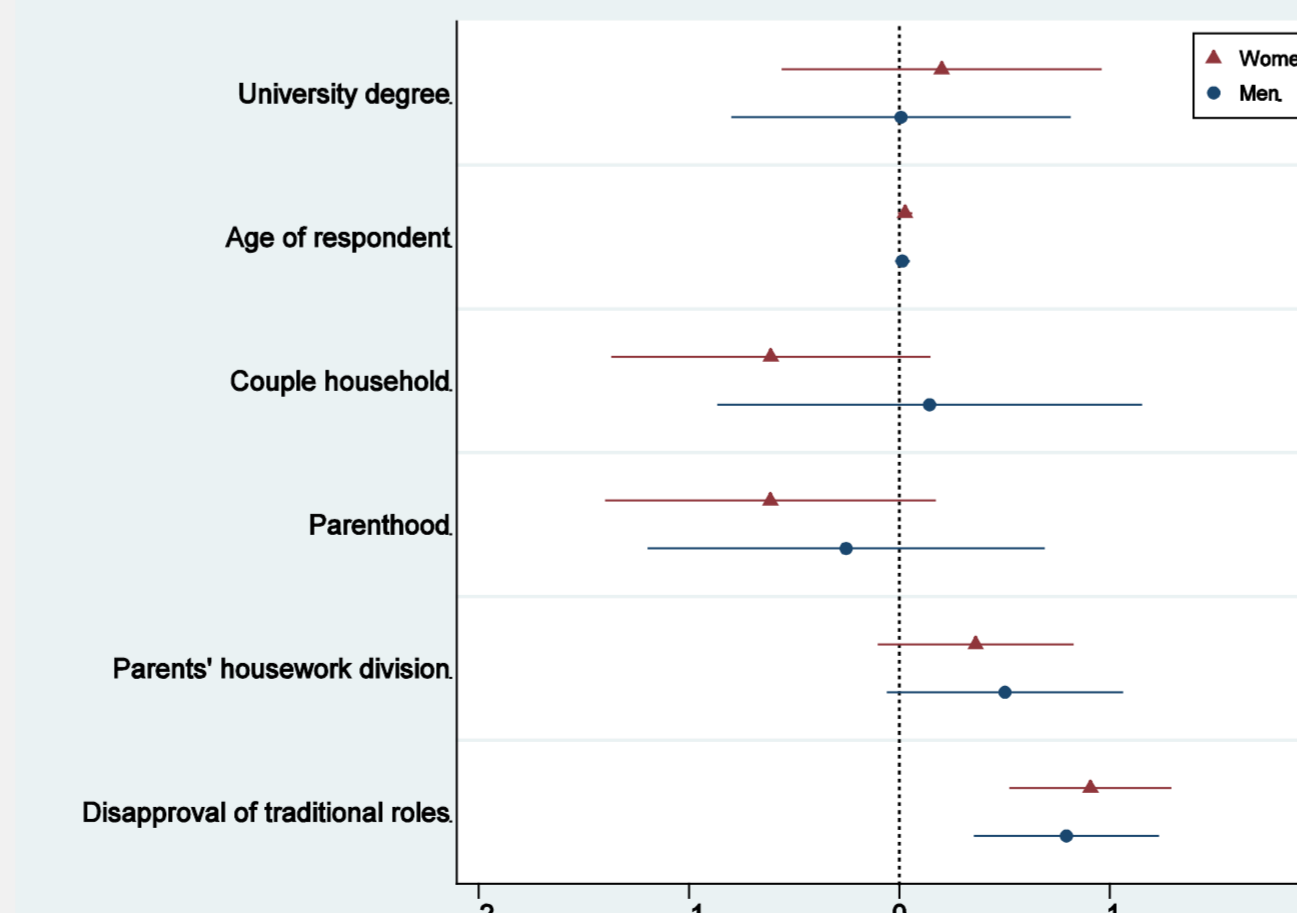
Figure 2. Predicted attitudes towards housework sharing by couple characteristics



Note: Means and 95% confidence intervals. Different scales per couple characteristic to better illustrate the differences between the groups. The predictions were estimated as average margins from a linear random intercept regression model and are adjusted by setting all other covariates to the sample means. n=1043 respondents, 4142 vignettes. Potential range of vignette ratings: 1 "woman alone" – 7 "man alone", 4 denotes "both partners equally".

- Relative employment produces most striking attitude differentials:
 - Equal resources → equal housework
 - Higher resources → less housework
 - Lower resources → more housework
- Less striking resource dependency of attitudes for relative income
- Women: higher responsibility of women when they have no income
- Marital status does not trigger attitude differentials
- Parenthood and age of children:
 - Women: higher responsibility of women in couples with no or older child compared to newborn child
 - Men: higher share of men in couples with newborn compared to school-aged children

Figure 3. Influence of respondent characteristics on the attitude towards housework sharing



Note: Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals of a linear random intercept regression model. n = 1043 respondents, 4142 vignettes.

- University education, age, having a partner, having children, and parental housework division do not influence attitudes (on 95% significance level)
- Disapproval of traditional roles shift attitude slightly towards greater male involvement for women and men
- Minor gender differences only on 90% significance level
 - Women: age
 - Men: parents' housework division

Design, Data and Methods

- Factorial survey
- Online survey, German opt-in online panel hosted at Freiburg University
- Respondent sample:
 - 1,120 German women and men
 - 58% women
 - Mean age: 47.6 years
 - Mostly living in intimate relationships with partners, either cohabiting or married
 - Half of the respondents have children
 - Respondents share high commitment to gender egalitarianism, generally and regarding housework division in particular
 - Sample is higher educated, men are older, women younger than in total population, but covers a broad age range (18-86) and all educational levels
- Initial vignette sample:
 - 120 vignettes from 684 'plausible vignettes' (D-efficiency: 92, ensuring level balance and factor orthogonality)
 - 30 blocks with 4 vignettes each
 - 1 block was randomly assigned to each respondent (random order of vignettes within block)
 - 6 Factors:
 - Marital status (married | unmarried)
 - Parenthood and age of children (no | newborn | kindergarten | school)
 - Man's employment (not employed | part-time | full-time)
 - Woman's employment (not employed | part-time | full-time)
 - Woman's absolute income (0 | 800 | 1800 | 3500)
 - Woman's relative income (less than | same as | more than partner)
 - Rating task: "Who should do the housework?", 7-point scale explicitly maps the possible arrangements
 - Direct measurement (each level is a precisely defined arrangement)
- Final vignette sample
 - 4445 non-missing vignette ratings
 - Over 70% of respondents perceived the ratings as "(very) easy", only 3% as "(very) difficult"

Vignette example

An unmarried couple is living together. They don't have children.

The man is working full-time, the woman is not employed.

The woman has 1800 Euros per months at her disposal. With this money, the woman contributes less to the household income than her partner.

Who do you think should do the housework in this couple?

Woman alone	Mostly woman	Rather woman	Both partners equally	Rather man	Mostly man	Man alone
①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦

Analytics

- Standard linear random intercept model (level 1: vignette factors, level 2: respondent characteristics)
- Margins at the means: adjusted predictions setting covariates to the sample means (outcomes don't change if setting covariates to the observed values of reference categories)