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***Gender Role Conflict and Bargaining over Housework: The Hidden Effect of
Relative Resources among Couples***

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the gendered division of domestic and care work among couples in Germany. It extends the literature by investigating one possible underlying mechanism through which relative socio-economic resources of both partners may relate to how the couple splits up the work. Specifically, we examine whether the partners' socio-economic resources may have a differential effect on possible bargaining outcomes over the distribution of domestic and care work, dependent on the agreement between partners' gender beliefs and ideology. We suggest that it is necessary to investigate whether both partners' gender ideologies (gender traditional versus egalitarian) actually are in agreement or conflict with each other, when possible measured early in the relationship. We hypothesize that relative and absolute socio-economic resources may play a stronger or different role for bargaining processes and the actual division of chores and childcare when couples disagree about gender roles. Couples who are in agreement on gender ideology may not have a lot to argue about in terms of the division of gendered work arrangements, so that resources may only be relevant and play a much more important role among couples who disagree on gender roles. We will use data from the Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamic (pairfam) and MLM growth curve models to examine whether the interplay between a mismatch in gender ideology and resources can predict not only the gendered division of housework but also the involvement of fathers in the care of their children.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Today, more women than ever (before) are obtaining higher education and are participating in paid employment/the workforce, in the industrialized world and beyond (Domański and Przybysz 2007; Kollmeyer 2012). This development has been intertwined with changes in family life and changing gender roles in the private as well as the public realm. Amongst other, men have been taking up a larger share of domestic work and childcare, while women have reduced their time spent on housework and increased their labor market hours (Bühlmann et al. 2009; Davis and Greenstein 2009, Bianchi et al. 2000 & 2012). Generally speaking, these trends have

been observed in many advanced nations, even though there is considerable variation in gendered family and labor market behavior across countries.

Central to a deeper understanding of these changes have been the questions of how couples share breadwinning and domestic duties and why they distribute the work the way they do. Many studies have investigated the factors - both from within couples and from the social contexts in which they are embedded - which are believed to contribute to these gendered behaviors (for an overview see Lachance-Grzela and Boucard 2010). In particular, the literature has been concerned with identifying the effects of life course events such as the transition to parenthood, partners' socio-economic resources such as schooling and income, and the partners' gender ideology on men's involvement with domestic work in general and father's time spent with child care in particular.

So far, most studies have identified significant effects of the birth of a first child (Schober 2013, Dechant et al. 2014, Gjerdingen & Center, 2005; Katz-Wise, Priess, Hyde, 2010) and of his and/or her gender ideology on the distribution of domestic work (and childcare?) (Evertsson 2014, Schober 2013), while the relationship between absolute and relative resources and the distribution of domestic work appears to be more ambiguous and context-dependent (Kühhirt 2012, Dechant et al. 2014, Gupta 2006). What is, however, still lacking in this debate is a deeper investigation, both theoretically and empirically, of the underlying mechanisms and interactions among the partners through which specifically gender ideology and relative resources are actually linked to the gendered divisions of the work domains. The investigation of possible mechanisms is, however, crucial, since gender ideology, and the distribution of domestic-, care-, and labor market roles in families are highly interdependent and hence endogenous processes.

Our study addresses this gap and attempts to model a mechanism through which resources may affect the bargaining over the division of domestic and care work. We investigate a specific linkage between partners' gender ideology and their absolute and relative socio-economic resources in affecting the division of house- and care-work. More specifically, we hypothesize that such resources may have a differential effect on possible bargaining outcomes over the distribution of work among couples, dependent on the agreement between partners' gender beliefs and ideology. We suggest that it is necessary to investigate whether both partners' gender ideologies (gender traditional versus egalitarian) actually are in agreement or conflict with each

other, when possible measured early in the relationship. We suggest that relative and absolute socio-economic resources may play a stronger or different role for bargaining processes and the actual division of chores and childcare when couples disagree about gender roles. Couples who are in agreement on gender ideology may not have a lot to argue about in terms of the division of gendered work arrangements, so that resources may only be relevant and play a much more important role among couples who disagree on gender roles (at the outset of the relationship).

To address this hypothesis empirically, we will use data from the Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamic (pairfam) and model whether conflicting gender ideologies at the begin of the observation period/panel predict if and how absolute and relative socio-economic resources of the partners affect the division of housework and childcare work in later time periods in this German sample. The data are very well suited for studying our hypotheses. The pairfam follows a sample of relatively young couples (anchors born between 1971 and 1993) over time, with yearly surveys of both partners, and a rich array of repeated questions on the division of various domestic work domains (housework, repair work, finances and organization, shopping, and child care), relationship quality and conflict, and gender ideology.

We will use growth curve models (MLM approach) to address two different dependent processes, namely the division of housework among couples with and without children, and the division of child care among parents, using all six available data waves. Hence, we will examine whether the interplay between a mismatch in gender ideology and resources can predict not only the gendered division of housework but also the involvement of fathers in the care of their children. Thus, we will contribute to both the debate of the gendered division of domestic-and care work, and the debate on what predicts fathers' involvement in time spent with care for their children. The data also allows us to control for reported levels of intra-couple conflict, and hence provides a handle for further exploring whether open conflict and reported conflict strategies mitigate or exacerbate a possible linkage between mismatched gender roles and resources in predicting gendered work divisions and father's involvement in childcare.

First preliminary findings indicate that there is indeed a differential effect of relative education on the division of housework. The results suggest that couples who disagree over gender roles (she more egalitarian ideology than him) have a more egalitarian division of housework when

her educational attainment is as least as high as his. They hence point to 'hidden' effects of relative resources on gendered work arrangements in couples.

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