

HOUSEWORK'S DIVISION IN 24 EUROPEAN SOCIETIES: A CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISON*

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The paper focuses on the factors which influence the sharing of domestic work in European countries. The prior studies have used as explanations the relative resources theory, the bargaining theory, the gender ideology or have combined them with some national features like welfare regime or gender equality, when predicting the housework's division. We will compare the factors influencing the chores sharing in various European countries using regression models. The paper employs the ESS data, available for 24 European societies, and indicates that individual resources and gender ideology influence the dependent variable in most of investigated countries.

***Keywords:** housework, gender ideologies, relative resource theory, comparative analysis, ESS.*

This paper aims to identify the factors influencing the sharing of domestic work in European countries. The explanation of housework division has stresses the effect of two different set of predictors: individual level indicators and country level indicators. The individual level explanation has paid attention to individual resources or gender ideology when predicting a spouse's contribution to the chores (South, Spitze, 1994; Breen, Cooke, 2005; Coverman, 1983; Presser, 1994; Hallerod, 2005). On the other hand, other studies have emphasized the effect of macro level indicators like the characteristics of the welfare regime, the level of gender equality or the economic development (Fuwa, 2004; Stier, Lewin-Epstein, 2007; Hook, 2006; Balatova, Cohen, 2002). Our approach is to compare the individual factors which influence the housework's division in different European countries.

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The paper is structured in four parts. In the beginning, we will provide a short overview of the existing literature. The second part introduces indicators and the strategy used for analysis, and the third comprises the data analysis. The final section is dedicated to the conclusions and to a short discussion.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES

Traditionally, the prevalent model in industrialized societies was that of gender division of tasks within the family: “full-time work for men” and “child care and housekeeping for women”. However, the traditional family model characterized by the wife’s full economic dependency was gradually replaced with the dual-career or the two-earner model of family, as the nature of employment changed (Esping-Andersen, 2002; Quinlan and Shackelford, 1980).

Many studies have shown the relation between economic development in the postwar period and the significant rise in demand for female labor (Esping-Andersen, 2002; Cotter et al., 1998; Quinlan and Shackelford, 1980; Oppenheimer, 1973; Weisskoff, 1972). The postwar economic development was characterized by a shift from primary to secondary and tertiary economic sectors. Growing industry and business created the need for new occupations and a labor force too. The increase in managerial and professional occupations mostly filled by men was accompanied by a higher demand for clerical positions, which were traditionally women’s domain. Discrimination against married women and women with children declined as a consequence of this expansion in female job opportunities and of a shortage of young single women (Oppenheimer, 1973). According to Cotter et al. (1998) the higher demand for female labor played a crucial role in increasing women’s labor force participation during the postwar period.

As women moved into paid work, the traditional model “men have the job, women do the housework” become questioned in the light of the changing social role. With the rise of the service economy, housewifery disappeared and it “become a fact of life that women insist on being economically independent” (Esping-Andersen, 2002, p.70). Full-time employment only for men became a thing of the past, and most people in the young generation were raised in a two-earner family.

With a higher level of educational achievement, women compete for higher professional and managerial positions. The once clear line between the “typical female job” and “typical male job” has become less visible. According to Esping-Andersen (2002, p. 71) “women’s life course is becoming more ‘masculine’, in terms of their lifelong career behavior”. Increasing interest in career development and a rise in the earning power of women is linked to a higher family income too. Thus, it is now a great disadvantage to have one partner excluded from the labor market. As the level of female participation in the labor market increased, the nature of the women’s economic status with respect to economic dependency and subordination within marriage also changed. The problem of combining career and

family life is one of the central issues of the gender equality debate, not excluding a debate on the unequal sharing of housework within households.

Two types of approaches shape the explanation of the housework division. The first focuses on the role of the individual characteristics. The second emphasizes the role of the interaction between individual characteristics and country-level features. The first group of studies can be clustered in two distinct categories: one stresses the role of the spouses' resources in sharing the domestic work, while the second focuses on the contribution of gender ideology supported by the individual.

The theories supporting the role of individual resources in the allocation of domestic work have their roots in economic theory. These studies point to the resources of the husband and wife, namely human capital and individual income, as the most important factor in housework division. Becker (1993) shows that the allocation of domestic work is the result of a rational process of decision making within the family, the spouse with the highest market income dedicating less time to domestic chores. According to the rational approach, housework division is not influenced by peoples' attitudes and values, but by a rational decision. The research which has addressed this topic shows that the role of relative resources matters in the sharing of housework.

Income and age seem to play an important role in housework division. Hobson (1990) argues that the power in decision-making within the family is linked to earning power of the spouse. Presser (1994) indicates that husbands with higher income do less housework, while the husbands older than their wives are less involved in domestic tasks. Geist (2005) finds that women with a higher income do less domestic work and Presser (1994) shows that when both of spouses have higher incomes the total amount of housework decreases. It seems that the total income of the household has a different effect, compared with that of the individual one, contradicting the resources theory. In households with higher earnings, the time spent for domestic work is lower, in comparison to poorer families, because the partners can afford to buy services on the market and the men are much more involved in the household chores. On the other hand, income includes an attitudinal effect (Brines, 1994), since people with higher income are more inclined to support gender equality.

A similar relation was reported in the case of education. If the partners have a high level of education, the sharing of domestic work is more equalitarian. Presser (1994) shows that the time spent by men for domestic work is higher for persons with a higher level of education. As in the case of income, the level of education includes an attitudinal effect; both men and women with a higher level of education support the gender equality ideology (Brines, 1994).

In addition to human capital and the level of income, the available time is a resource which can influence the allocation of domestic work. The spouse who has more free time will spend more time doing housework, no matter the sex. Presser (1994) points out that the number of hours spent at home makes the time dedicated

by both husband and wife on domestic work increase. Ross (1981) and Geist (2005) have had similar results.

The dependency theory states that the husband and the wife are dependent on each other, the man providing the family income, while the woman supplies the housework. According to this approach, domestic work is provided in exchange for money, this relation being a contractual one (Brines, 1994). Thus, women are in charge of domestic work, not because of gender role stereotypes, but because they are dependent on men, who have a better position in the labour market. However, Brines (1994) shows that the dependency theory is valid only for women, since dependent men do even less housework than non-dependent men. However, even if both partners are employed and have equal incomes, the dependency is reported, but it is symmetrical, and women have a better status and more power in negotiating the household chores (Oppenheimer, 1997).

Another version of the resources theory points out that the allocation of housework is the result of a bargaining process. The main assumption of this approach is that, usually, people avoid doing domestic work, using their relative power within the family to obtain a lower burden. Consequently, women who have less power due to their lower income and higher dependency have to do more, as compared to men. Bargaining power is not determined only by the level of income. The available alternatives play a role, as well (Breen, Cooke, 2005). Thus, women will do most of the housework, even if they do not like it, as long as they consider that the marriage is the best alternative for them. The implicit assumption of this approach is that there are conflicts within households and the allocation of the domestic role is based on power relations (Hallerod, 2005).

According to previous studies, women's employment plays an important role in the equal sharing of domestic work. Ross, Mirowsky and Huber (1983) note that when women are employed, their housework is reduced, since they have more resources, and the difference between them and their husbands is smaller. Ross (1987) shows that employed women do less housework because they are less dependent on their husbands. A working woman has more money and less available time. Thus, according to the resource theory, she will perform less domestic work, and a part of the burden will be taken by her husband.

However, resource-based approaches cannot fully explain the allocation of housework. Hallerod (2005) points out the ineffectiveness of economic theories in explaining the sharing of household chores, in Sweden. Moreover, Hobson (1990) and Brines (1994) point out that, even if a woman becomes the main breadwinner in the family, and thus has a higher bargaining power to rearrange the division of housework, the unemployed husband usually resists involvement in doing housework. In this case the couples 'do gender', stressing traditional gender roles in order to compensate the man who has failed in the male role of main breadwinner.

According to Gender ideology perspective, the division of housework is the result of the values shared by the spouses. Thus, a woman who subscribes to

traditional gender ideology will perform all the domestic tasks, even if she is employed, because this is prescribed by the couple's values (Diefenbach, 2002). Previous studies support the contribution of values orientation in explaining the division of housework (Ross, 1987; Diefenbach, 2002; Geist, 2005; Presser, 1994; South, Spitze, 1994). Ross (1987) stresses the effect of the husband's gender attitudes on sharing the household chores, while Presser (1994) points out the role of the wife's expectation and her gender ideology.

Gender values may be placed in two different categories: values related to women's participation in the labour market and values regarding housework division (Voicu, 2004). In addition to the direct effect of values regarding the sharing of housework, Thornton, Alwin, Comburn (1983) and Ross, Mirowsky, Huber (1983) show that sex-role attitudes strongly influence women's involvement in the paid labour market. We expect that both dimensions are involved in the division of housework.

Many studies have demonstrated that religious beliefs and religious practices have a great influence on attitudes towards gender roles (Sherkat, Ellison, 1999; Ghazel Read, 2003; Wilcox, Jelen, 1991; Peek, Lowe, Williams, 1991; Gay, Ellison, Powers, 1996; Thornton, Alwin, Comburn, 1983; Sherkat, 2000; Hertel, Hughes, 1987). This research has shown that those who are religiously affiliated, especially to a fundamentalist Protestant denomination or to the Catholic Church, are more inclined to share non-equalitarian attitudes towards gender roles and to consider that women are first of all housekeepers and mothers. Some studies have identified a similar relation at the macro level. Hofstede (1981, 1990) has classified countries according to their main gender role orientation, countries with a masculine culture, in which the predominant attitudes are those of differences between gender roles, and countries with a feminine culture, which encourage gender equality. Using Hofstede's classification, Verweij, Easter, Nauta (1997) point out that countries with a feminine culture are more secularized than those with a masculine culture. Thus, we expect that a high level of religiousness will be associated with low level of gender equality and, consequently, will determine a low involvement of the husband in domestic work.

The presence of children in the household also has an impact on the chores' sharing. Although our paper is focused on housework and excludes time spent for childcare, the children's presence in the household will directly influence the total amount of time dedicated to domestic chores like cleaning, cooking, and doing laundry. According to Esping-Andersen (2002), even if an increase in women's employment makes their life-cycles more masculine, female careers are limited by the desire to have children and the duties of motherhood. Previous studies have pointed out that the presence of children in the household will increase the time spent on domestic duties for both partners, but mainly for women (Presses, 1994). Moreover, according to Cooke (2004), couples experience a crisis in the gender division of housework after the birth of their first child.

However, children and families with children represent an important topic for social policy. For most women, participation in the labor market depends on the possibility of combining career and motherhood. According to Esping-Andersen (2002), a women-friendly policy includes affordable day-care, paid maternity leave and provisions for work absence when children are ill. According to Hobson (1990), there are also other important social services which allow women to have a job – in-school lunch, after school programs and care for elderly parents.

Other researches have stressed the effect of a country's characteristics on the equal division of housework, explained by aspects like the welfare regime (Stier, Lewin-Epstein, 2007; Fuwa, 2004; Hook, 2006), the gender equality (Fuwa, 2004; Balatova, Cohen, 2002), the women involvement in the labour market (Stier, Lewin-Epstein, 2007; Fuwa, 2004), cohabitation rate (Balatova, Cohen, 2002) and the equalitarian gender ideology (Diefenbach, 2002; Stier, Lewin-Epstein, 2007; Fuwa, 2004; Greenstein, 1996, 2004; Evertsson and Neramo, 2004).

The characteristics of the welfare regime are often invoked for explaining the differences between countries in how housework is shared. The conservative welfare regimes have a lower instance of equal sharing in household chores, while the social-democrat states have a higher level and in the liberal countries women are highly involved in the housework, especially when they have children (Borja, 2002).

The history of the country and the interaction between history and individual features may also influence the gender equality (Knudsen, Waerness, 2001). The differences between the former communist countries and the Western states can be considered as part of the same explanation. The particularities of the communist welfare system and of the societies under the soviet regimes generated a different pattern of gender relations. Social policies during communism encouraged women's involvement in the labour market, but without support for gender equality in housework (Brainderd, 1997; Pascal, Manning, 2000; Zamfir et al., 1999; Lohkamp –Himmighofen, Dienel, 2000; Pascall, Kwak, 2005; Steinhilber, 2006). On the other hand, gender equality policies were introduced in very traditional societies, and citizens of post-communist countries used to think of gender relations in a more traditional way (Hanson, Wells-Dang, 2006). Thus, we expect to find significant differences between Eastern and Western European countries, post-communist societies being more inclined to uneven sharing of the housework.

Controlling for the factors mentioned by previous studies to have an impact on the gender division of the housework, we intend to test the effect of religious orientation and practices and the effect of technological development on how people are sharing the domestic work. Starting from the theoretical approaches referred above, we propose two basic hypotheses:

(H1) The resources theory and the gender ideology theories are not exclusive, but complementary, the division of the housework being influenced by relative resources and by ideology.

(H2) European countries differs with the respect of housework division between men and women, Scandinavian countries being the most equalitarian in Europe, while the post-communist ones being more inclined to uneven sharing.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA PRESENTATION

The population of our study consists of couples which live together, whether they are officially married or not. We considered only heterosexual couples, in order to be able to investigate gender differences. Moreover, in order to have similar basis for partners' time budgets, we have excluded those couples in which at least one of the partners is retired. Our analysis is based mainly on the ESS02 (European Social Survey, round 2, 2005) data set, including 24 European countries, coming from all European regions¹. In order to test our hypotheses, we produced several ordinal last squared regression models for each country. In all these models, the household is the unit of analysis.

The dependent variable. The research offers information about the total number of hours used by the household for housework, both during a regular week-day and a regular week-end day. Then, a couple of ordinal variable allows a comparison between the respondent and his/her partner: *And about how much of this time do you spend yourself?* 1. None or almost none; 2. Up to a quarter of the time; 3. More than a quarter, up to a half of the time; 4. More than a half, up to three quarters of the time; 5. More than three quarters, less than all of the time; 6. All or nearly all of the time. A few transformations (the first category of the ordinal variable becomes 0; the second 0,125; the third 0,375 etc.) allow an estimate to be computed of the number of hours spent for housework by each of the two partners weekly. The difference between the wife and the husband in terms of weekly hours spent for housework represents the dependent variable.

The independent variables. We employ several predictors for the *general level of resources of the household*. A 12-point scale indicates the relative income of the household. It has been computed by the ESS research team for each of the countries included in the sample and stands in the data set as the only variable related to income.

For *education*, we might have employed an ordinal variable, the highest level of education achieved. The database includes this information for both the respondent and the partner, allowing us to compute a dummy variable, indicating if the wife is better educated than the husband. We use this variable to test for the resource allocation theory. However, for household education we have preferred the interval variable given by the number of full-time years of education completed

¹ Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

by the respondent. Since we lack similar information for the partner, we have assumed that the couple is homogenous and the education of one of the spouses may reflect the education of both. The results of the analysis proved to be an external validation of our choice. As indicator for *age*, we employ the age of the oldest spouse. The *age difference* between the husband and wife is also considered as potential indicator for testing the bargaining theory.

We use dummy variables for the various combinations of the *employment statuses* of the spouses (both employed, both unemployed and the two mixed situations), leaving the case when both partners are employed outside the regression model as a reference category. We have also run alternative models with dummies for the wife's and the husband's employment status. The number of hours weekly by each of the partners in their main job is also used for testing the resource allocation theory.

For *value orientations* and some related behaviors (religiousness and gender values) we have used the characteristics of the respondent as rough indicators for the situation of the couple. The same assumption that the couple reunites similar people was made. *Religious practice* is measured as church attendance at least once a week or less frequently. A ten-point subjective self-assessment of religiousness stands for the respondent's (and, implicitly, the household's) religious belief.

For the value orientation of supporting *gender equality on the labor market*, we use the average value of two 5-point scales, indicating the level of disagreement with the statements *A woman should be prepared to cut down on her paid work for the sake of her family*, and *When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women*. For the values of supporting equal sharing of labor, we use agreement with the statement *Men should take as much responsibility as women for the home and children* (also on a 5-point scale).

Using the level of agreement with other three statements (*There are so many things to do at home, I often run out of time before I get them all done; I find my housework monotonous; I find my housework stressful*), we have computed, as a factor score, an index of how *stressful housework* is. Another subjective indicator provides information about 'how well equipped is your home for housework', on a 10-point scale.

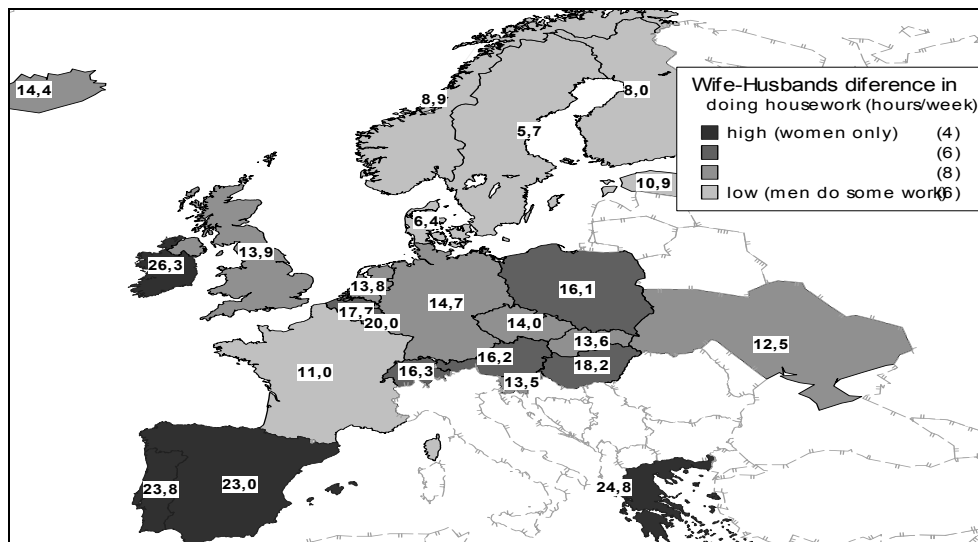
DATA ANALYSIS

In all the European countries, women spend more time for housework than their partners. On average, In Nordic countries, the difference between women and men is about few hours a week, proving that they are the most equalitarian. In Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and Greece, the wives do around 20 hours more housework than men. Contrary to our hypothesis, the post-communist societies are, on average, more equalitarian than the others.

It seems that post-communist countries are more supportive for the equal sharing of domestic work, compared to Western ones. Poland is an exceptional case, the dominant pattern being the traditional model of the division of work within the family. The data indicates, as other researches, Poland's evolution towards a more non-equalitarian/traditional gender policy (Pascall, Lewis, 2000; Fodor, Glass, Kawachi, Popescu, 2002; Pascall, Kwak, 2005; Steinhilber, 2006). According to previous researches, the Catholic Church seems to be one of the most important factors in supporting the re-traditionalization of family life and in promoting the image of the 'Polish mother'.

Figure 1

Differences between wives and husbands in doing housework across 33 European societies

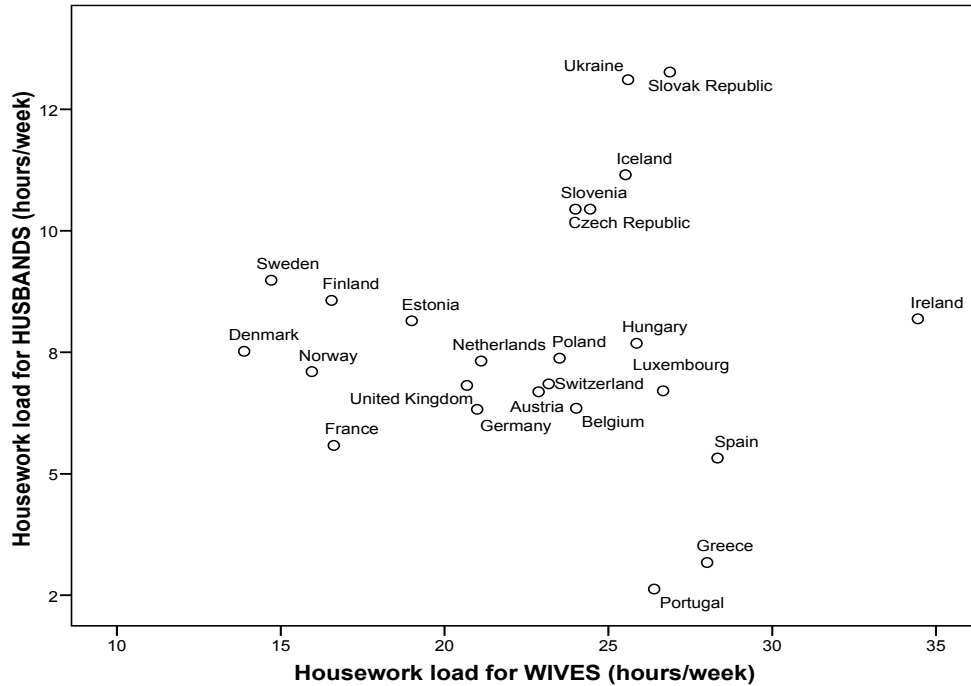


Data sources: ESS02 (2005).

When considering the size of the housework load (Figure 2), the citizens of less developed societies tend to spend more time on housework, while Western and Northern European citizens are the opposite. According to the data, European countries cluster in a few categories: the ex-communist countries, characterized by a high level of housework performed by both husband and wife; the traditional Catholic countries, Malta and Ireland, with a high level of housework and not equal share between the partners; the Mediterranean countries, Spain, Greece and Portugal, in which the amount of time by wife for the domestic work is higher compared to that of the husband, but the total amount of this time is lower as compared with the previous category. The countries with a higher level of economic development have an unequal sharing of housework, too, but the time spent by women doing housework is reduced.

Figure 2

The number of hours per week spent on housework by men and women across Europe



Data source: ESS02 (2005).

In order to check the effects of the individual level factors in each society, we have run the regression model for each of the 24 countries included in the ESS02 data base (Table 1). One should be cautious in interpreting the results for each country, because for some countries only a few cases were valid for the analysis, due to missing answers, as well as to the selection criteria – limited to heterosexual couples where none of the partners is retired. The unweighted N is 200–250 in several countries (Spain, Iceland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia, Ukraine and Slovenia), and ranges up to a maximum of about 740, for Norway and Sweden. Given this, our interpretation of the effects of each predictor considered not only the significant coefficients, but also the tendency given by the signs of the insignificant coefficients registered for all 23 societies.

It is important to note that the regression model fits the data for the Western countries better than Eastern ones. When not including the total number of hours spent each week on housework by the household members, the model explains between 20 and 30 percent of the total variation in countries as Spain, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Switzerland, Belgium and Germany and less than 20% for countries from Central and Eastern Europe.

Table 1

OLS Regression models of sharing housework, in 24 European societies

Dependent: difference <women – men> of the number of hours spent on housework per week

	AT	BE	CH	CZ	DE	DK	EE	ES	FI	FR	GB	GR
Age of the oldest spouse	0.0	0.1	0.1	-0.1	-0.1*	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1**	0.0	0.1
Age difference	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.3**	0.0	0.1	-0.2	0.2	0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.0
Income	-0.1	-0.2	-0.7**	-0.2	-0.1	0.1	-0.9	-0.3	-0.1	0.0	-0.2	0.1
Education	-0.3	-0.2	-0.3**	0.0	-0.5**	-0.4**	0.1	0.0	-0.3**	-0.2*	-0.5**	0.0
Wife better educated than husband	-0.4	-1.1	-1.8	-2.9	-3.0**	-0.8	-0.5	-2.1	0.4	0.8		2.3*
man – no job, woman – has job	-12**	-9**	-18**	-20**	-14**	-6**	-10**	-18**	-13**	-14**	-6*	-12**
man – no job, woman – no job	2	-11**	-6*	-7**	-5**	2	-4	-6	-14**	-4**	-6*	-3
man – has job, woman – has job	-5**	-6**	-6**	-11**	-4**	-2	-6**	-10**	-7**	-4**	-4**	-5**
Wife's working hours	-0.1*	-0.1	-0.2**	-0.2**	-0.2**	-0.1**	0.0	-0.2**	0.0	0.0	-0.1*	-0.1**
Husband's working hours	0.2**	0.2**	0.2**	0.2**	0.1**	0.2**	0.2**	0.1	0.2**	0.1**	0.2**	0.1**
# of children < 13 y.o. in the household	0.1	-0.8	1.1**	-0.8	0.7	0.9*	-0.3	0.4	0.1	-0.4	0.9	0.5
Equipped for housework	0.5	-0.1	-0.1	-0.4	0.2	0.7**	0.5*	0.0	0.1	-0.6**	0.0	0.0
Stressful housework	0.4	0.1	1.1**	1.5**	0.7	0.6	2.6**	1.4*	0.7	0.1	0.3	0.3
Household equality	-0.4	0.0	-0.8	0.2	-1.8**	-2.2**	0.1	-0.3	-0.9	-1.7**	-1.5	-1.1
Labor Market Equality	-1.8**	-1.6**	0.4	-0.4	0.1	-0.8	-1.6**	-1.5	0.0	-1.3**	-1.9**	-0.2
Religious belief	0.0	-0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	-0.2	0.1	0.4**	0.0	-0.4	0.5*
Religious practice	-0.4	5.5*	-0.7	-5.0*	2.1	3.9	-2.1	-2.0	1.4	0.5	2.1	0.7
Weekly hours of housework by all household members	0.4**	0.5**	0.6**	0.3**	0.5**	0.2**	0.3**	0.6**	0.3**	0.6**	0.5**	0.8**
Adjusted R square	31%	43%	50%	29%	49%	24%	21%	51%	24%	59%	33%	63%
<i>Unweighted N</i>	302	415	517	391	611	494	409	254	648	467	414	272

	HU	EI	IS	LU	NL	NO	PL	PT	SE	SI	SK	UA
Age of the oldest spouse	0.1	0.2**	0.2**	0.0	0.0	0.1*	0.1	0.1	0.1**	0.3**	0.0	0.0
Age difference	0.3	-0.2	-0.2	-0.3*	0.0	0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	-0.1
Income	-3.9**	-0.9	-0.5	1.3**	-0.3	0.0	0.0	-0.5	-0.2	1.4	0.0	1.1
Education	0.5	0.4	-0.4	-0.4**	-0.4**	-0.5**	-0.8**	-0.2	-0.2	-0.7	-0.2	-1.0**
Wife better educated than husband	2.5	1.4	-1.7	-0.7	0.9	0.0	-0.8	-0.3	0.1	2.0	0.1	-2.5
man – no job, woman – has job	-16**	-22**	-3	-21**	-13**	-9**	-16**	-8**	-9**	-15**	-13**	-9**
man – no job, woman – no job	-14**	1		-13**	-3	-6**	-4	-8**	-2	-11	-14**	-14**
man – has job, woman – has job	-8**	-9**	-8**	-8**	-5**	-5**	-8**	-3**	-4**	-18**	-11**	-9**
Wife's working hours	-0.1	0.0	-0.2**	-0.1**	-0.1**	-0.1*	0.0	-0.1*	-0.1**	0.1	-0.1	0.0
Husband's working hours	0.1	0.1	0.2**	0.1**	0.1**	0.1**	0.2**	0.0	0.1**	-0.1	0.1	0.1**
# of children < 13 y.o. in the household	-0.1	1.1	0.4	1.4*	0.9**	-0.1	-1.2**	0.2	0.7	-3.3**	0.1	-1.5*
Equipped for housework	0.3	0.9	0.5	-0.5	0.1	0.5*	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.8	-0.4	-0.1
Stressful housework	1.0	1.7	1.2	1.2*	0.6	1.1**	-0.3	0.2	0.7*	4.1**	1.6	2.8**
Household equality	-1.0	-0.1	-2.0	-0.2	-1.8**	-1.8**	-0.9	-0.2	-0.3	-0.6	0.1	-0.6
Labor Market Equality	-0.9	-2.3**	-0.3	-3.0**	-0.4	-0.5	-0.5	-0.9	-1.3**	0.3	-1.9	0.9
Religious belief	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.2	-0.2	0.3**	-0.1	0.0	-0.7*
Religious practice	2.8	1.4	0.0	-0.8	0.9	-1.0	-2.2	0.8	-0.8	-2.2	-4.6*	-2.3
Weekly hours of housework by all household members	0.3**	0.4**	0.4**	0.5**	0.6**	0.4**	0.4**	0.8**	0.2**	0.3**	0.1**	0.1**
Adjusted R square	28%	37%	49%	53%	49%	34%	42%	70%	18%	24%	11%	11%
<i>Unweighted N</i>	<i>360</i>	<i>389</i>	<i>205</i>	<i>262</i>	<i>548</i>	<i>743</i>	<i>304</i>	<i>214</i>	<i>741</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>230</i>	<i>237</i>

Data source: ESS02. For the description of the indicators see text. Significance levels: * $p \leq 0,10$; ** $p \leq 0,05$.

The main findings of the analysis run country by country indicate that the value orientation towards gender-equality, the woman's employment, and her

education are the most important factors which determine a more equal sharing of the housework. Gender ideology has a significant impact on the dependent variable in almost all the countries included in the analysis. In addition, women's involvement on the formal labour market decreases the inequality of housework division. The same effect is reported for the women's level of education. The housework's sharing tends to be more equalitarian if the woman has a higher level of education and she is active on the labour market. The total amount of housework is highly significant in all the investigated societies and has a negative impact of the equalitarian division.

In some Western societies, age has a significant impact: the older a couple is, the less equally the housework will be divided between them, with women having a relatively higher share. The age difference between partners is not important except for a few societies: in the Czech Republic, the older the husband is as compared with his wife, the more share of the housework she gets. In Luxembourg, the relation is the opposite: when women are older they do relatively less housework.

In several western societies, the presence of young children (as well as their number) increases the probability of women doing more housework than men. In the Eastern part of the continent the relation is insignificant. In a few cases (Slovenia, Poland, Ukraine), the presence of young children strangely decreases the differences within the couple. This might be the effect of the fact that, in the absence of well-developed facilities for childcare, there is too much domestic work for one person, so the husband has to take on more, equilibrating the balance².

When the household is perceived as being better equipped with home appliances and other tools for housework, one may expect that the gender differences in sharing domestic duties will decrease. This does not hold true for some societies: significant correlations are reported for Estonia, Denmark, Norway, but the sign of the coefficient is the same in other societies, too. In a few other Western countries, the relation is reversed, and the expected results are obtained: better equipped households display lower inequalities. All these findings should be considered with the caution that a 'better equipped household' is a subjective, one-item measure. In those societies where religious belief and practice make a difference, their effect is to increase an unequal sharing of the housework.

CONCLUSION

The paper aims to investigate the effect of individual's characteristics on the housework division. We have tested the effect of various factors on the sharing of the domestic work in different European societies, using data from ESS 0.2. Taking into consideration the factors which are influencing the chores' sharing, like individual resources, time availability and gender ideology we have tried to see which of them are shaping the housework division.

² The authors wish to thanks Tor Lindbloom for the help in developing this explanation.

As expected, the differences in the equal sharing of housework do indeed vary across Europe. A low level of the equal housework sharing is reported in Southern European countries – Portugal, Spain, Greece – and Ireland, where the wives do around 20 hours more housework than men. Nordic countries seem to be the most equalitarian ones, with only a few hours difference per week.

On the other hand, when considering the size of the housework load, the citizens of the ex-communist countries tend to spend more time on housework, while Western and Northern Europeans do less. These results, accompanied with assumptions derived from theory, indicate that some important consequences can be expected from the fact that individuals are influenced by the social and economic contexts to which they belong.

The analysis pointed out that housework sharing is in many European countries the result of a mixture of factors, like individual gender ideology, individual resources and housework load. The resource allocation theory is partially contradicted by the fact that relative household income was not a significant indicator in most of the models we have run. The model explains a higher share of the total variation in Western European countries and a lower share in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

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Data sources

European social survey, round 2 (ESS02), 2005.

Articolul studiază factorii care determină diferențele de gen în împărțirea sarcinilor domestice în cuplurile din Europa. Numeroase studii anterioare furnizează explicații ale fenomenului bazate fie pe teoria resurselor relative, fie pe teoria negocierii, pe ideologiile de gen sau pe combinații ale acestora cu unele caracteristici ale societății, precum regimul bunăstării sau egalitatea de gen. Utilizând modele de regresie, testăm simultan aceste teorii pentru țările Europene. Folosim, în acest sens, datele ESS.02, disponibile pentru 22 de țări. Arătăm că atât resursele individuale cât și ideologia de gen, influențează modul de împărțire a sarcinilor domestice în interiorul cuplurilor din majoritatea țărilor luate în considerare.

Cuvinte-cheie: muncă domestică, ideologii de gen, teoria resurselor relative, analize comparative, ESS.