

Why Study Housework?

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To understand how married people divide the household work, a wealth of research has examined the characteristics of the husband, the wife, and their household. A keyword search for *housework* in *Sociological Abstracts* yields a remarkable 1736 scholarly publications. These studies, however, have focused on single-country cases and usually on the United States. The research has had little of the cross-national comparison that enlivens and informs so much of contemporary sociology. Because “traditional” gender relations and the balance of work–family activities are being challenged to varying degrees from country to country, the time has come to examine how national context affects the very organization of intimate family life. In this volume, leading international scholars take a path-breaking turn away from single-country studies, extending a rich area of inquiry to show how people’s domestic lives are shaped by the country in which they live. The ambitious research by our contributors bridges the micro and macro levels of analysis to demonstrate how social institutions and national cultures penetrate the most intimate aspects of our private lives.

Why study who does the housework? At one time, housework was of little scholarly interest outside the field of home economics, a pragmatic branch of academia dedicated to bringing the scientific efficiency of modern industry to the household (Ehrenreich and English 1978). The study of housework gained broader legitimacy when labor economists observed that men divided their time between market work and leisure, but women also spent time in “home production” (Mincer and Polachek 1974). Whether they produced tidy homes or polite children or buttered biscuits, their household labor contributed to the well-being of their families. Under the banner of the “New Home Economics,” neoclassical economists applauded husband–wife differences in household responsibilities for bringing the efficiencies of economic specialization to the family (Becker 1981). Sociologists also found much to admire in a system that saw men largely in the labor force and women mostly in the home. The most honored American sociologist of

the mid 20th century, Talcott Parsons, argued that the wife's expressive role within the household complemented the husband's instrumental one in the market; taken together, they were the cornerstone of a functional equilibrium in the family (Parsons and Bales 1955).

Feminists, however, have long denounced these differences in gender roles as the linchpin of a patriarchal system of inequality that disadvantages women not only at home, but also at work, in politics, and in the broader culture of the society (Budig 2004). For their part, some contemporary social demographers point to women's "double shift" of housework and paid employment as explaining why so many women think two children are too many (Cooke 2004; McDonald 2000; Torr and Short 2004). Even when employed full-time, wives spend many more hours doing housework than husbands, and they perform the more tedious tasks (Blair and Lichter 1991; Dex 2004). Compared with husbands, wives are more likely to "scale back" their career to prioritize family demands (Becker and Moen 1999; Bielby and Bielby 1989). Although both women and men say that they would like to spend more time with family, it is largely the women who want to work fewer hours (Treas and Hilgeman 2007). Wages are depressed by time spent in child rearing (Budig and England 2001) and in housework (Hersch and Stratton 2002)—or, at least by time spent on "female" chores (Noonan 2001). Family-accommodating careers lead to lower earnings even at midlife (Velsor and O'Rand 1984). The imbalanced division of housework has consequences for health and well-being, too. Perceiving the division of household labor as unfair raises the risk of depression (Glass and Fujimoto 1994). Dissatisfaction with a partner's contributions to housework decreases marital quality, and it increases marital conflict and thoughts of divorce, particularly for women (Pina and Bengtson 1993; Suiitor 1991; Ward 1993).

Couples choose how they will divide the chores, starting from the point when they choose to live with one another (Gupta 1999). Most theorizing about domestic decision making has centered on the way in which the characteristics of husband, wife, and their household shape this decision making (Coltrane 2000). One guiding assumption has been that partners arrive at rational decisions about who will mind the children, cook the dinner, and pick up the dry cleaning. One keen consideration has been whose time is regarded as too valuable for this sort of unpaid work. This determination has usually favored the man, whose job prospects—for a variety of reasons—have exceeded the woman's. With his valuable time devoted to earning a living, his hours left over for diaper changing and dusting were limited, and this work fell largely to his wife. This general argument is often called the "time availability" explanation for the division of household labor (Shelton and John 1996).

A bigger home may increase the amount of housework required (van der Lippe, Tijdens, and de Ruijter 2004), but it is the arrival of children that

tends to scuttle any egalitarian intentions and press couples into even greater gender specialization (Baxter, Hewitt, and Haynes 2008). These considerations point to what has been widely referred to as “demand” (for housework) explanations of who does what around the home—albeit a gendered demand conditioned on cultural ideals about the relation of mothers and their children. Of course, fertility everywhere has fallen, presumably lowering one source of demand for housework—although the time children themselves require does not seem to have declined (Bianchi 2000; Sayer 2005). In addition, as the value of women’s time in the labor force has increased, they, too, are working for pay and have less time to mind the house. The upshot of changes in demand for housework and time availability has been a number of accommodations. In various countries, these include not only the wife doing a lot less housework and the husband doing a bit more (Bianchi et al. 2000; Gershuny 2000), but also couples outsourcing more chores to hired helpers and commercial establishments (Bittman, Matheson, and Meagher 1999; de Ruijter, Treas, and Cohen 2005; Treas and de Ruijter 2008; van der Lippe, Tijdens, and de Ruijter 2004).

Although rational decision making in the face of shifting opportunities and constraints is a big part of the story, there is another significant consideration—namely, personal preferences. Individuals’ attitudes and values lead them to prefer some sorts of domestic arrangements over others. Researchers have stressed a distinction between those whose values support “traditional” versus “nontraditional” gender roles, although, as some of our contributors suggest, this broad-brush description of preferences is an oversimplification. Studies show that gender role attitudes tend to line up at least loosely with the actual allocation of housework (Coltrane 2000), but “traditional” attitudes are clearly losing ground (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004; Scott, Alwin, and Braun 1996). There is even some evidence that gender ideology matters less to housework decisions than it once did (Crompton, Brockmann, and Lyonette 2005). Furthermore, partners do not necessarily share the same preferences (Greenstein 1996), which means some element of bargaining and negotiation enters into decision making about the household division of labor (Bernasco and Giesen 2000; Breen and Cooke 2005; Youm and Laumann 2003). In any case, many sociologists regard preferences as social products that depend to some degree on institutional structures and cultural traditions.

Gender poses one complication to the tidy logic of rational choices and predictable outcomes. The outcome of bargaining has long been argued to depend on the comparative clout of the partners, as epitomized by the “relative resources” explanation for the division of labor in the household (Coltrane 2000). These resource discrepancies may manifest in relative earnings, the economic dependency of the homemaker on the breadwinner, how credible

divorce threats seem, one's subjective sense of entitlement, and a host of other considerations (Baxter and Kane 1995; Breen and Cooke 2005; Brines 1993; Major 1993). When it comes to household negotiations, women do tend to be at a bargaining disadvantage with respect to most of these factors. In fact, disadvantage compounds from level to level so that gender inequality in the broader society undermines whatever bargaining power over housework is derived by the woman from employment-based resources (Fuwa 2004). Of course, some women make more money than their husbands, and their numbers are growing (Raley, Mattingly, and Bianchi 2006). Despite their resource advantage, these women appear to pay a price, because the husbands out-earned by their wives defy rational predictions. Rather than doing more housework so the wife can spend more time in breadwinning, these husbands have sometimes been seen to do less (Bittman et al. 2003; Brines 1993).

Although the significance of relative earnings has been questioned (Gupta 2005, 2007), the paradox of husbands doing less housework when wives do more paid work brings us to an important idea. Clean laundry, accomplished children, and savory meals are not the only things produced in the home. As Sara Berk (1985) famously pointed out, the household is a gender factory. What economists have called *home production* includes the manufacture of gender through everyday heterosexual interaction (West and Zimmerman 1987). In other words, women do housework and men eschew housework, in part, to show off the feminine or masculine competence desirable for their gender. Known variously as the "gender construction" or "doing gender" explanation, this perspective offers an account of the relative income paradox in that men who fall short as dominant breadwinners can reassert their masculinity by avoiding "women's work" around the house. Gender construction could also explain women's tendency to do more housework when living with an adult of the opposite sex than when living with a same-sex adult or alone (Gupta 1999; South and Spitze 1994). Because gender identity is central to personal identity, it is hardly surprising that gendered domestic arrangements continue to subvert the most egalitarian impulses. Despite the drudgery, women find things to like about doing housework and even resist handing off some of this responsibility to men (Allen and Hawkins 1999; DeVault 1991; Robinson and Milkie 1998). Few married women see a 50/50 division of housework as optimal (Thompson 1991). In fact, most wives are quite satisfied when their husband shows he cares by providing token help with the "woman's work" around the house (Sanchez and Kane 1996).

The discussion of what women (or men) want begs the important question of why we want what we want. Theorizing in the social and behavioral sciences has moved beyond paradigms that view us as merely the passive products of socialization. We are no longer assumed to be captives of our

social roles. Rather, we are seen as reflective individuals capable of resisting imperatives and exercising our human agency to change our lives and remake our environments. This is a nuanced view that makes explanations of behavior more contingent and problematic, even if there is no denying that we are shaped by our experiences. Take the example of childhood socialization. Growing up with a working mother is associated with more egalitarian housework arrangements in one's own marriage, but only, it seems, under certain conditions, such as coming from a two-parent family (Cunningham 2001; Gupta 2006).

Certainly our environment constitutes the frame that influences how housework is organized, because it constrains the set of options that are available and, indeed, imaginable to us. "Who washes the dishes" is not just an idiosyncratic, personal arrangement. The behavioral options we perceive are limited by a force field of normative expectations and societal structures that channel domestic activities in predictable directions. This observation points outward beyond the immediate household, because it acknowledges the influence of the broader context in which we live. Although this context surely includes the examples of parents and peers, it also includes pervasive cultural models and taken-for-granted assumptions about men and women, parents and children. These ideals offer handy prototypes for our lives. Studies of housework have only begun to grapple with a host of structural factors that suppress options or make conscious decision making largely irrelevant. Focused on the husband, wife, and household, studies of the division of household labor have only rarely addressed the broader context within which preferences are formed and housework arrangements are worked out. Remedying this omission is the objective of this book.

The contributors to this volume are among the scholars at the forefront of new comparative scholarship on the division of household labor. Indeed, the contributors figure prominently in a representation of this field, which includes Batalova and Cohen (2002); Baxter (1997); Bittman et al. (2003); Cooke (2006); Crompton, Brockmann, and Lyonette (2005); Davis and Greenstein (2004); Evertsson and Neramo (2007); Fuwa (2004); Geist (2005); Gershuny (2000); Hook (2006); Iversen and Rosenbluth (2006); Pfau-Effinger (2004); Treas (2008); and Yodanis (2005).

In *Dividing the Domestic*, the authors embrace the broader social context to advance our understanding of the division of household labor. Leveraging on country-to-country differences in domestic organization, they systematically relate these country differences in the division of housework to national differences in welfare regimes, social policies, employment structures, cultural expectations, and more. Their chapters not only draw on existing theories of gender, culture, and the state, but they also introduce novel conceptual frameworks for understanding why the household remains

a traditional bastion of gender relations, even as massive social forces of globalization, welfare state retrenchment, and individualism call into question existing relations between citizen and state, worker and employer.

Their frameworks integrate contemporary sociological perspectives, including some seldom applied to the study of domestic arrangements. Feminist critiques, social policy analysis, labor studies, the sociology of culture, and principles of social psychology all find a place in these chapters. Cross-national comparisons demonstrate that the causes of gender specialization in the household cannot be understood without looking beyond the home. As the contributors demonstrate, a full accounting of “who does the housework” includes the complicity of trade unions, state arrangements for children’s schooling, new cultural prescriptions for happy marriages, and other factors specific to particular countries. By identifying the critical conditions that promote or impede gender parity in the family, cross-national comparisons of household labor can also inform policies to advance equality between men and women in society.

This necessarily brief introduction to the previous research on the division of housework sets the stage for a preview of the substantive chapters that define this volume. Drawing on time diaries, cross-national sample surveys, official statistics, comparative policy data, and qualitative interviews, these chapters offer timely empirical descriptions and fresh explanations for the variation in domestic practices observed across countries.

In “Trends in Housework” (Chapter 2) Liana C. Sayer leads off by charting changes in time use for men and women in nine countries in western Europe and North America. Although there are certainly country-to-country differences in the onset and size of changes, time diaries going back 40 years confirm that women have been doing less housework and men have been doing more. In most countries, men are actually doing more of the cooking and cleaning chores that make up the “routine” drudgery of daily life. Despite the remarkable increase in female labor force participation, however, women continue to do the lion’s share of work around the house in all nine countries. Also complicating the picture is the fact that the increase in housework for men has stalled in a number of nations. On the basis of these trends, it is too early to say to whether the gender convergence in time use heralds the dawn of gender equality or the remarkable persistence of female domestic disadvantage.

Marriage, parenthood, and paid employment dictate the demand for household labor, gender-specific domestic norms, and time available to keep house. Thus, as Sayer notes, these three status markers are usually taken as good predictors of the amount of housework someone will do. To be sure, marriage and parenthood increase women’s housework time, and their housework is more sensitive than men’s to being married or a parent. At

least in some countries, however, these effects and differences are weaker than they once were. Historically, paid employment decreased household labor more for women than men. Recently, the association of housework and employment has become more similar for men and women in four of the nine countries. In Sweden, whether one is a paid worker is now unrelated to housework. In short, not only has time use generally converged between men and women, but there is also evidence that men and women have become more alike in terms of the factors determining their housekeeping efforts. Showing that marriage, parenthood, and employment continue to matter more for women's housework in conservative countries than in the liberal states and Nordic social democracies, Sayer ushers in chapters that explore the significance of this broader social context for gender and household labor.

Tanja van der Lippe takes up the issue of cross-national differences in female labor force participation with "Women's Employment and Housework" in Chapter 3. Although female labor force participation has increased across a diverse set of countries, there continue to be marked country-to-country differences in the number of hours women are in paid work. Part-time jobs are common in Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, for instance, but not in the United States or southern European countries. Existing theories emphasizing available time, the relative resources of husband and wife, and gender ideology all agree that a wife's full-time job will decrease her time spent on domestic duties. Prior theorizing on how the institutional context affects the organization of domestic work is less well developed—a fact that motivates this volume.

Building on the Esping-Andersen (1990) welfare regime typology widely used to characterize nations, van der Lippe takes the first step in the direction of theorizing context. As her multilevel analysis of data from the International Social Survey Program confirms, women everywhere do fewer hours of housework when they do more hours of paid work. Whatever their personal circumstances, however, wives in egalitarian Nordic countries (i.e., the social-democratic welfare regimes) devote significantly less time to domestic duties than their counterparts in conservative welfare regimes such as Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Switzerland. This is consistent not only with Sayer, but also with van der Lippe's other findings—namely, wives in countries characterized by higher enrollment in child care facilities, higher gender empowerment, and higher gross domestic product spend less time on domestic work. There is much more variation in housework hours within countries than between them, but this analysis leaves little doubt that country context matters for women's (and men's) housework.

Although van der Lippe points to systematic differences between welfare regime types, Lynn Prince Cooke (Chapter 4) takes aim at the policy

differences within regimes that give rise to distinctive divisions of domestic work. National education systems, tax codes, and labor laws may seem far removed from the dishpan or the laundry hamper, but Cooke's "The Politics of Housework" offers a convincing analysis of how they influence the balance of women's and men's time in the home and the workplace. By reinforcing women's domestic roles, restricting their access to paid employment, or limiting their ability to form independent households, state policies shape the context in which rational decision makers opt for relatively traditional gender relations.

We might expect Australian, British, and American couples to take similar approaches to dividing household labor, because they all reside in English-speaking, liberal regimes emphasizing market solutions over the state's responsibility for welfare. Cooke's tour of three liberal countries, however, reveals that they each have distinctive policy packages. Australia buttresses men's advantages in paid employment, Great Britain encourages women's responsibility for unpaid household work, and the United States hones to the liberal tradition of minimal state involvement. Not surprisingly, women are twice as likely to work full-time in the United States as in Australia, with Britain falling somewhere in between. In all three countries, women cut back similarly on housework in response to their employment, but nowhere do men truly pick up the slack. Anticipating the chapter by Gupta and colleagues, Cooke links gender inequality with class inequality, observing that husbands and wives with higher incomes have greater parity in their division of household labor.

Lynn Prince Cooke makes a persuasive case for state policies fostering the gendered division of household labor. If policies can sustain the gendered division of housework, can public policies also eliminate this domestic inequality? Chapter 5, "Can State Policies Produce Equality in Housework?," is the provocative analysis by Shirley Dex. She asks whether equalizing housework is a feasible or even a particularly desirable policy goal. Dex takes the Swedish "Daddy Leave" policy—providing new fathers time off work—as a model with obvious implications for household labor. While endorsing the policy's strategic focus at a point in the life course when partners may be more open to renegotiating their roles, she nonetheless describes how modest the effects of this state policy intervention have been. Part of the problem is that state policy is only one of many institutional and cultural forces sustaining a gendered division of household labor, a message of complexity that squares with other chapters in this volume.

According to Dex, the best way to equalize household labor between men and women is to equalize their wage rates. This would certainly reduce the incentive for men to specialize in breadwinning while leaving women to manage the home. Compared with the family-friendly initiatives for paren-

tal leave, public child care, and child allowances, governments have shown little interest in bringing men's and women's earnings in line with one another. The benefits of women's higher wages may be evident—higher household income, less economic dependency for women in marriage, protection against impoverishment in divorce, higher old age pensions, and, at least in the United States, health insurance coverage. However, Dex argues, many women—a majority in many countries—are highly invested in their domestic and caring responsibilities. They are apparently content with low-paid, part-time employment, which offers few advancement opportunities, but allows them to meet family responsibilities without major changes in who does the laundry. Dex acknowledges that this may not be the worst situation. Citing time diary studies, she points out that the total hours of paid plus unpaid work are nearly the same for men as for women. In line with the conclusions presented by Liana Sayer, she also observes the gradual convergence in housework time seen for many countries—a growing equality in domestic life that has transpired largely in the absence of state policy interventions.

Chapter 6, “Economic Inequality and Housework,” is a fruitful international collaboration among Sanjiv Gupta, Marie Evertsson, Daniela Grunow, Magnus Neramo, and Liana C. Sayer. Their analysis pioneers a new research agenda on household labor by asking about the socioeconomic inequalities in the housework that women do. Their studies reveal substantial differences between women at the top and the bottom of the earnings distribution in Germany, Sweden, and the United States. This economic inequality in women's time in housework is greatest in the United States, where women in the bottom 10 percent of the earnings distribution spend a full hour more each day on household chores than women at the top of the distribution. Disadvantaged in so many other ways, low-income women face a more onerous burden in keeping up home and family. Because earnings inequality is also greatest in the United States, this three-country comparison raises the intriguing possibility that macrolevel economic inequality contributes to inequalities in the burden of domestic work. Together with Cooke's finding that higher income couples in Australia, Great Britain, and the United States achieve a more equitable division of housework, the link between domestic gender inequality and class inequality emerges as an important new direction for research.

Birgit Pfau-Effinger invites a culture turn with Chapter 7, “Cultural and Institutional Contexts.” She advocates using cultural schema to provide a fuller understanding of cross-national differences in the organization of households and, particularly, caring work. Focusing on women with small children in eight European countries, she identifies three dominant patterns based on women's employment and the use of formal child care. To explain

these behavioral patterns, she turns to four cultural models that embody the prevailing values about gender, children, and relations between the public and private spheres. Welfare state typologies alone fall short of explaining female employment and child care arrangements. For example, we might expect high full-time female employment and high usage of formal child care to characterize the Nordic social democratic states, which excel at public provision of child care. Yet, this pattern characterizes Finland, but not Norway. It also characterizes France, a conservative regime that we would expect to have limited child care usage and mostly part-time work. What unites Finland and France (and postsocialist East Germany, too) is the “dual-breadwinner/external care provider” cultural model wedded to a societal appreciation of gender equality. Although housework differs in some important ways from child care, the cultural approach that Pfau-Effinger develops holds promise for understanding both kinds of work. As she observes, a “servant culture” tradition, which legitimizes using paid housekeepers, offers southern Europeans ways of organizing domestic life that would not sit well with many Scandinavians, whose egalitarian values conflict with hiring low-paid employees to do their dirty work.

Like Birgit Pfau-Effinger, Maria Charles and Erin Cech examine the influence of culture in their “Beliefs about Maternal Employment” (Chapter 8). They are interested in the ideologies of motherhood and the cultural beliefs about children that sustain ideals of full-time maternal care for children in the home. Drawing on surveys for nearly three dozen countries, they demonstrate the cross-national variation in public opinion regarding maternal employment. In Denmark, only 2 in 10 women believe mothers of preschool children should stay home to care for their youngsters, as opposed to 6 in 10 in New Zealand. Even among women who share similar social and demographic characteristics, there are marked country-to-country differences in attitudes. The familiar welfare state typologies help account for some important cross-national differences in women’s attitudes about what mothers should do. In conservative welfare regimes, for example, there is more support for mothers staying home full-time than in social-democratic countries. But analyses also reveal much attitudinal variability *within* regime types. This within-regime variability maps to differences in national child care provisions and other gender-relevant policies not typically considered by mainstream welfare state scholars. Following Cooke and Pfau-Effinger, the insights of Charles and Cech lend further support to feminist critiques that have called for greater attention to how specific family policy provisions help shape cultural beliefs about gender roles and family patterns.

While the chapters by Pfau-Effinger and by Charles and Cech both focus on culture and motherhood, Carrie Yodanis directs our attention to the

cultural ideals for marriage in Chapter 9, “The Institution of Marriage.” According to Giddens (1992), contemporary marriage is founded on pure, albeit fragile, relationships that champion personal fulfillment and individual gratification. This philosophy represents a radical departure from traditional views of marriage as a practical arrangement for raising children, husbanding resources, and gaining the respect of the community. Although the 20th-century ideal of companionate marriage may have emphasized the institution’s emotional rewards, it deviated from pure relationships, because it also called on partners to subjugate personal desires to the common interest and to a fairly conventional division of labor. Yodanis uses survey data to rank countries on the importance placed on intimacy in marriage. The Americans, Swedes, and Chileans believe intimacy is important to marital success. The Russians, Japanese, and Portuguese are unconvinced. As Yodanis reports, cultures that value closeness and communication in marriage are countries that have greater gender equality in the division of housework. Carrie Yodanis gives us a lively account of the cultural changes undermining the constraints of marriage as an institution while promoting gender convergence on the domestic front.

Johannes Huinink and Alexander Röhler also point to cultural changes in marital ideals. Chapter 10, “Pair Relationships and Housework,” draws from the social psychological literature on pair bonding to construct a typology that relates couples’ emotional ties and their housework arrangements. In affectual–traditional relationships, traditional gender norms determine household behavior. In affectual–associative relationships, partners reject strict gender roles to share housework equally. Last, in highly individualized affectual–pragmatic relationships, housework is organized to advance one’s personal preferences with little or no concern for justice or equality. Huinink and Röhler draw on qualitative data from West and East Germany in a thoughtful comparative analysis of the ways in which a unique historical legacy and contemporary circumstances shape the domestic lives of heterosexual couples.

Important differences emerge between East and West. The egalitarian affectual–associative type is more common in western Germany, especially among highly educated persons. The affectual–traditional type is more widespread in eastern Germany, where it is found in all socioeconomic groups, in contrast with West Germany, where it is mostly a working-class phenomenon. The East–West differences reflect, in part, the postreunification persistence of the communal versus individualistic orientations in the two societies. The couple differences are also linked to the practical demands in East Germany, where wives under socialism were expected to work full-time, where postunification hardships continued to require their

employment, and where there was less room than in the West for gender ideology to determine who does the dishes. Ironically, it is the affectual-traditional East Germans, not the affectual-associative West Germans, who display the most egalitarian sharing of housework. As Charles and Cech point out with respect to maternal employment, the differences between East and West Germans demonstrate that social policy regimes can have enduring normative effects.

In Chapter 11, “Men’s and Women’s Reports about Housework,” Claudia Geist turns to cross-national survey data to examine the extent to which men and women agree on how much housework each does and how fair the domestic arrangements are. Research in the United States has observed that married men report doing more housework than women credit their husbands with doing (Kamo 2000). Whether reporting discrepancies hold in other countries is an unexplored question with important methodological implications for cross-national survey analyses. Focusing on the gender gap in reporting, Geist seizes the opportunity to consider gender inequality from a new angle. As she shows, there is an almost universal tendency for men to report more housework hours than women think that their partners do. Women’s own housework reports both exceed and lag behind their partners’ estimations, varying substantially across countries. In countries where the sheer volume of domestic work is high, men tend to underestimate their wife’s housework hours (or women report doing more than they actually do), but women also tend to underestimate their husbands’ hours (or men exaggerate their contributions). Like Huinink and Röhler, Geist considers self-interest in household labor. If, however, men and women inflate reports of their efforts and downplay their spouse’s to gain a strategic advantage in household negotiations, why would this be linked to the volume of work? One possibility is that men are simply less aware of what women do in societies where the burden of housework is the greatest, perhaps because gender roles are more specialized (and hence partner’s responsibilities are poorly understood by the other gender). Or, maybe much housework goes unobserved by the husband when it more closely approximates the adage that “women’s work is never done.”

Rounding off these substantive chapters is the concluding essay by Sonja Drobnič (Chapter 12). To her falls the important task of integrating the research in this volume, and she makes clear that the book is more than the sum of its parts. Focusing on several overarching themes, she demonstrates how they are informed by the research reported in particular chapters. She also points out the new research findings that emerge from the cross-national study of the division of household labor. As our book makes clear, housework remains a strategic site for the study of gender inequality, micro/macro linkages, and cross-national differences.

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