
Norms about the « gender » of childcare, division of tasks, and fertility in France and Germany

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Background

- At the **macro level**, variations in fertility across industrialized countries explained the possibility to combine work and family for women (affordable childcare)
 - At the **micro level**, another factor facilitating the conciliation for women, men's implication in family work, has been linked to higher fertility
 - Relation found in relatively high and low fertility countries: Berinde 1999 Olah 2003, Miller and Torr 2004 Cooke 2004, Cooke 2006, Mills et al. 2008, Rizzi, White and Kertzner 2009.
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- The relation is positive only when women's work load is heavy (at least one child, full time work)
 - U shaped relationship: very unequal division of family work also linked to higher fertility
- ⇒ **Satisfaction** with the division of family tasks identified as a key intermediate variable (Bernardi et al. 2010)
- Satisfaction linked to the actual work load and to **individual attitudes** towards gender roles
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Research question

- Individual attitudes towards gender roles shape satisfaction with the division of tasks, and hence fertility
 - But also dominant norms towards gender roles in the context in which the individual lives
 - Indeed, satisfaction is a relative concept, because individuals compare themselves to others when deciding whether they are satisfied or not
 - How does the perception of unfairness with the division of tasks vary across national contexts, on top of individual variations?
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Methods and data

- A comparative approach
 - France and Germany: similar in most respects except family policy and fertility
 - Qualitative approach: identify dominant norms, individuals' satisfaction with division of tasks, and fertility intentions
 - Fertility intentions: categories developed in REPRO WP5
 - 62 in depth interviews (35 Western Germany, 27 France), 2004 - 2007
 - Middle class individuals, 28 – 33 years, F and M
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Results: France

- Almost all mothers in the sample work (full time or close to full time); childless respondents plan to do so.
 - Negative attitudes towards full time mothering in France:
 - *Q : You will continue to work [after the second child] ? R: yes, I do not think that I am made to stay at home, I like very much take a day off to stay with Noah from time to time, to take care only of him, but I don't think I am a housewife, no. [...] For all concerned to be happy, I think I need to work. (Dominique, F, 29, 1 child)*
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- About half of the French respondents have found (or plan to find) an arrangement where fathers share family work
 - *“I think that there is nothing that... What could I do alone with the children that Nico has never done? No I see absolutely nothing. Because whether it is cooking, painting, some Plasticine, or reading a story [...] working in the garden... all these things that I do, he does too”* (Camille, F, 29, married, 2 children)
 - Father’s participation is considered as normal *“Childrearing is the business of both of us. The child, anyway, is made by both of us”* (Benoît, M, 27, childless).
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- French respondents who hold a traditional vision of gender role all mention the advantages of working mothers for children and the necessity of men's participation in family work.
 - *“I will appear “cliché” once again, but the father, it represents more financial security, and the mother's more into providing affective, maternal security. [...] To have a working mother also helps to cut the umbilical cord between the mother and the child and him grow up, be independent” (Ariane, F, 30, childless)*
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- No men in the sample express dissatisfaction about their division of task
 - However, some French working mothers who are not helped by their partner at home perceive their situation as unfair.
 - *Let's say when I leave work I fetch the little one and until he's in bed I don't have a moment for myself. I don't know ... do you have children? But my beloved husband of course, when he gets in from work at half past seven it's the little one's bathtime but he can't do it, obviously, he's just got in, he's tired. (Sandrine, F, 30, 1 child).*
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- Not all women with a an unequal division of family tasks perceive their situation as unfair
 - Only when the division of tasks is perceived as unfair do mothers (with one or two children) with a double burden have negative or uncertain fertility intentions
 - Sandrine does not know whether she wants a second, she is “*selfishly fine with just one child*”.
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Results: Germany

- In Germany, women usually stop working at the birth of a child, for one or more years, and then take up very part time work
 - Women's family work is highly valued
 - *"I think I'm very old-fashioned in that regard. I don't think there will ever be a question of that (him taking the parental leave) for us. Even at the beginning he found it hard to accept that I earn more than him. (...) He still hasn't completely accepted it. So I think there's no question of that for us. He could just as well breast feed the baby. (Paula)*
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- Even respondents with progressive visions of gender roles share the valuation of motherly child care
 - Fransiska shared the parental leave with her husband. Noticing that her husband was always irritated in the evening after spending the day with their son:
 - *It's all very well for men to want to take parental leave, but I don't think they have same capacity to stay unruffled as women have. (Franziska)*
 - Women in the sample renouncing to have children share the valuation of motherly care.
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- Men's participate little to family work in the German sample (their affective and educational participation is present and valued)
 - *"In the end [the man] must be able to maintain his family"* (Martin, M, 29, childless)
 - Some men contribute more, usually out of obligation (sick wife, wife in training, ..), but these men often express a dissatisfaction
 - *« Because I wanted to study at home [..] but our son does not understand. Of course, he sees his dad and he wants to play, when I still have to study. It worked out at the end, but it was stressful, I found, it was tiring. »* (Markus, M, 28, 1 child)
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- Dissatisfied German men have uncertain or negative fertility intentions (one child)
 - Markus: « *and when it was really very tiring with one child, I said to myself, a second now, you won't make it, you cannot achieve that* »
 - No mother in the German sample complains (even those with heavier work hours)
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Summary

- Devaluation of home making for women and valuation of men's family work in France
 - Valuation of motherly care in Germany
 - Visions shared by all, on top of individual attitudes towards gender roles
 - Women with a double burden sometimes dissatisfied in France -> negative / uncertain fertility intentions; no men dissatisfied
 - Men with a « double burden » sometimes dissatisfied in Germany -> negative / uncertain fertility intentions; no women dissatisfied
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- Satisfaction with the division of tasks, which is important for future fertility plans seems indeed linked to norms about gender roles prevailing in a given context, on top of what individuals think about gender roles and their actual work load.
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