

Inequality or workload? How domestic work matters to childbearing in British dual-earner couples

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Previous evidence and motivation

- Traditional division lowers 2nd births in dual-earner households in Italy, Germany, US, Hungary, Sweden (Cooke 2003, 2004; Short and Torr 2004; Olah 2003)
- UK context: large diversity of work/care arrangements
- Previously no consideration of partners' gender attitudes or total workload –no questioning of why it matters
- Domestic work assumed less important for 1st births

Research question

How does couples' likelihood to have a 1st or 2nd child differ based on their division of domestic work in consideration of wives' gender attitudes and total workload?

Assumptions:

- Mismatch between division of domestic work and gender attitudes produces dissatisfaction with inequality
- Large total workload produces stress and frustration

Hypotheses

H1: Families with one breadwinner more likely to have a 2nd birth than dual-earner couples

Among dual-earner couples:

A traditional division of domestic work to lower childbearing compared to couples that share:

H2: If female partner holds egalitarian gender attitudes

H3: If female partner works long paid or total hours

Data and method

- British Household Panel survey (waves 1994-2004)
- Cox proportional hazard models
- Separate models for 1st and 2nd birth
- Dependent variable: Likelihood of a 1st/2nd birth given that couple hasn't had a child/had one child already
- Sample: ~300 first and second births

- Husband spends $>1/3$ of couple's total housework time
- Husband shares childcare responsibility



**Explanatory
variables
(lagged)**

- Men's and women's gender role attitudes
- Men's and women's religiosity
- Demographic controls: partners' education, age, marital status, relationship length, age of 1st child
- Women's paid work hours
- Both partners' total hours in paid work and housework
- Socio-economic controls: housework help, day-care use, wives' and couples' hourly earnings

Results overview

Association	1st birth	2nd birth
H1: Male breadwinner versus dual-earner couples	n/s	.536
Division of housework	n/s	n/s
Division of childcare responsibility	-	n/s
Using informal childcare	-	.284
H2 – Inequality: confirmed for 2nd births		
Wife’s egalitarian gender att. X man contributes to hw compared to wife most housework	n/s	.399
H3 - Total workload: confirmed		
Wife’s total hours	-.010	-.009
Wife’s paid work hours >45 X man shares hw	.661	n/s

Conclusions

- Workload and inequality important
- Diversity in arrangements that facilitate childbearing
- Overload or inequality may keep some couples from having the number of children they desire
- Greater support for non-traditional arrangements to enable genuine choice
- better measurements and qualitative evidence needed

Results for 1st birth

	Model 1	Model 2
Wife does most housework - omitted		
Husband contributes to housework	-.132	
Woman 0-45 total hours -omitted		
Woman 46-55 total hours	-.181 [^]	
Woman over 55 total hours	-.279*	
Woman wrk hours≤30 X wife most housework		.884***
Woman wrk hours≤30 X husband contributes to hw		.870*
Woman wrk hours 30-45 X wife most housework		.687*
Woman wrk hours 30-45 X husband contributes to hw		0.541 [^]
Woman wrk hours>45 X wife most hw - omitted		
Woman wrk hours>45 X husband contributes to hw		0.509 [^]

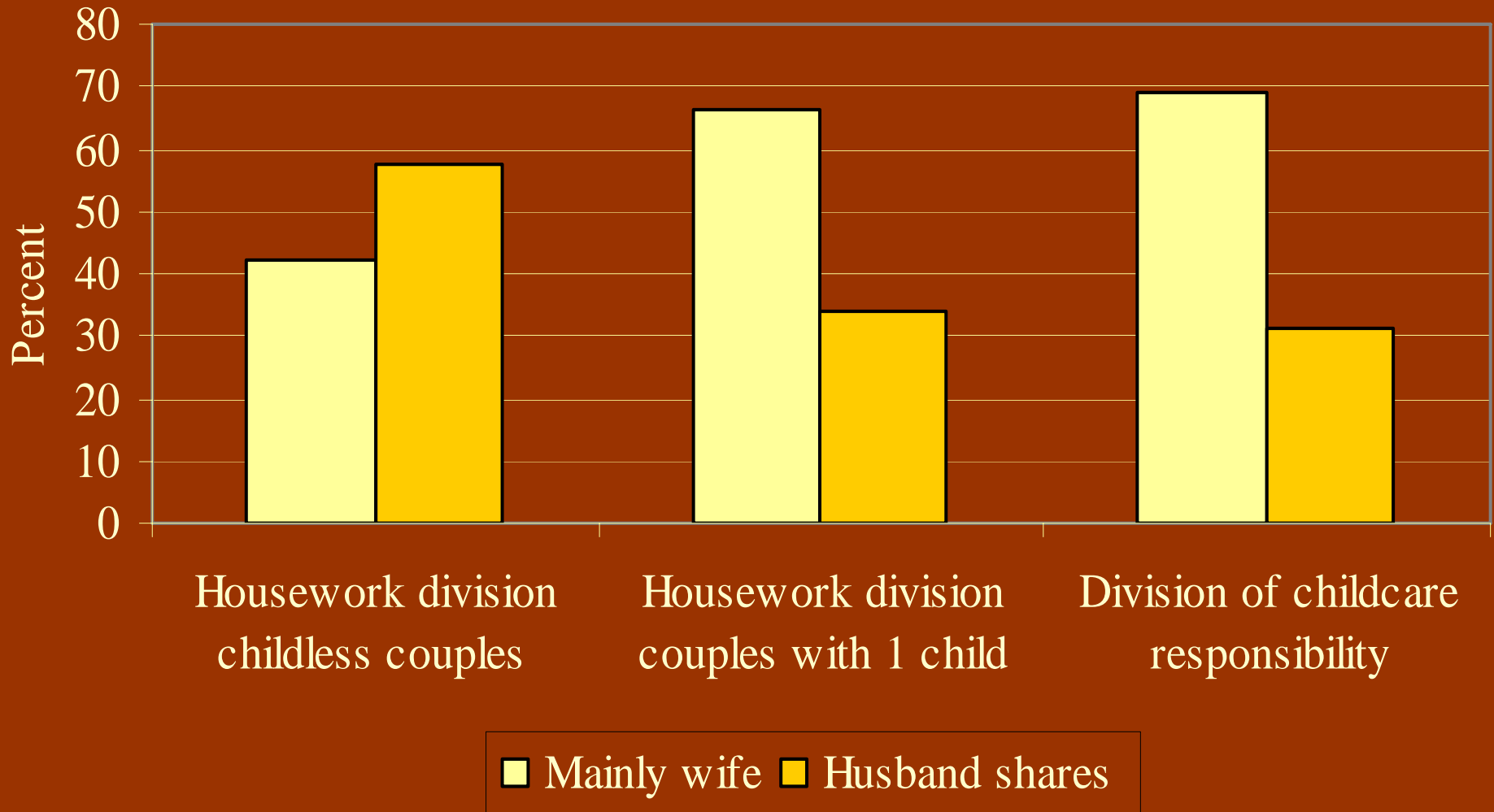
Results for 2nd birth – H1

	Model 1
Wife does most housework - omitted	
Husband contributes to housework	0.105
Wife main childcare responsibility – omitted	
Husband shares or takes more childcare responsibility	0.094
Man works full-time/woman not employed – omitted	
Man works full-time/woman part-time	-.630***
Family with two full-time workers	-.554**
Wife works full-time/man part-time or not employed	-.202
Other breadwinning arrangements	-.630*

Results for 2nd birth – H2 & H3

	Model 2	Model 3
Wife traditional gender att X wife most housework	.188	
Wife traditional gender att X husband contributes to hw	.248	
Wife moderate gender att X wife most housework	.137	
Wife moderate gender att X husband contributes to hw	.248	
Wife egalitarian gender att.X wife most hw – omitted		
Wife egalitarian gender att.X husband contributes to hw	0.072 [^]	
Wife total hours<=45 X wife childcare resp.		0.557*
Wife total hours<=45 X husband shares childcare resp.		0.469*
Wife total hours 45-55 X wife childcare resp.– omitted		
Wife total hours 45-55 X husband shares childcare resp.		0.458 [^]
Wife total hours>55 X wife childcare responsibility		0.502 [^]
Wife total hours>55 X husband shares childcare resp.		0.425

Division of domestic work (1st year observed)



Modelling strategy

H1: Effects of (fe)male breadwinner vs dual-earner couples

H2 & H3: Dual-earner couple sample

- Additive effects of domestic work division, total work hours, and gender attitudes
- Interactions of domestic work division with wives' gender attitudes
- Interactions of domestic work division with wives' paid work hours or total work hours

Modelling strategy

$$(1) \text{Log}[h_i(t)/h_0(t)] = \beta_1 d_{it-1} + \beta_2 b_{it-1} + \dots + \beta_k X_{it-1}$$

$$(2) \text{Log}[h_i(t)/h_0(t)] = \beta_1 d_{it-1} + \beta_2 g_i + \beta_3 w_{it-1} + \dots + \beta_k X_{it-1}$$

$$(3) \text{Log}[h_i(t)/h_0(t)] = \beta_1 d_{it-1} g_{it-1} + \beta_2 d_{it-1} + \beta_3 g_{it-1} + \dots + \beta_k X_{it-1}$$

$$(4) \text{Log}[h_i(t)/h_0(t)] = \beta_1 d_{it-1} w_{it-1} + \beta_2 d_{it-1} + \beta_3 w_{it-1} + \dots + \beta_k X_{it-1}$$

b_i ...division of breadwinning

d_i ...division of housework time/childcare responsibility

g_i ...wives' gender role attitudes

w_i ...wives' total paid and domestic work hours

X_i ...other controls

Structure

- Motivation
- Evidence from previous studies
- Research question
- Hypotheses
- Data and method
- Results
- Limitations and policy conclusions

Motivation

- Dual-earner families growing due to economic need and women's career aspirations
- Parenthood results in greater gender inequality
- Total work largest among dual-earner couples with young children



Does it reduce the likelihood of having children for some women? due to perceived inequality or overload?