

THE PERSISTENCE OF GENDER INEQUALITIES IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF UNPAID WORK: AN EXPLANATORY CONTRIBUTION

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Abstract

This article analyses whether and to what extent gender inequalities persist in the distribution of unpaid domestic work among younger Europeans with higher education, segments of society where the ideals of gender equality are particularly present. Using data from the International Social Survey Programme, we show that this inequality persists to a significant degree, which leads us to draw up a set of hypotheses aimed at contributing to the effort to analyse this phenomenon. This framework of hypotheses draws attention to the importance of analytically considering the cultural survival, albeit in a mitigated, modified and diffuse form, of relevant aspects of the male breadwinner model.

Keywords: unpaid work, gender inequalities, ISSP, male breadwinner model

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Resumo

A persistência de desigualdades na distribuição do trabalho não pago: uma contribuição exploratória

Este artigo analisa se, e em que medida, persistem desigualdades de género na distribuição do trabalho doméstico não pago entre os europeus mais jovens e com educação superior, segmentos da sociedade onde os ideais de igualdade de género estão particularmente presentes. Explorando dados do *International Social Survey Program*, mostramos que esta desigualdade persiste de forma significativa, o que nos conduz ao desenho de um conjunto de hipóteses que visam contribuir para o esforço da análise deste fenómeno. Este quadro de hipóteses chama a atenção para a importância de se considerar analiticamente a sobrevivência cultural, ainda que de forma mitigada, modificada e difusa, de aspectos relevantes do modelo do *male breadwinner*.

Palavras-chave: trabalho não pago, desigualdades de género, ISSP, modelo do *male breadwinner*

Résumé

Persistence des inégalités dans la répartition du travail non rémunéré: une contribution exploratoire

Cet article analyse si, et dans quelle mesure, les inégalités de genre persistent dans la répartition du travail domestique non rémunéré parmi les jeunes Européens ayant un niveau d'éducation supérieur, segments de la société où les idéaux d'égalité de genre sont particulièrement présents. En exploitant les données de l'*International Social Survey Programme*, nous montrons que cette inégalité persiste significativement, ce qui nous amène à formuler un ensemble d'hypothèses visant à contribuer à l'effort d'analyse de ce phénomène. Ce cadre d'hypothèses attire l'attention sur l'importance de considérer analytiquement la survie culturelle, bien que sous une forme atténuée, modifiée et diffuse, des aspects pertinents du modèle du *male breadwinner*.

Mots-clés: travail non rémunéré, inégalité de genre, ISSP, modèle du *male breadwinner*

Introduction

Studies on unpaid domestic work (household and care work) (Hertog *et al.*, 2021) have shown, since the 1960s (Román, 2021), that most of this work is done by women, especially the routine and time-consuming tasks. Despite the increasing participation of women in paid work and the growing involvement of men's participation in domestic activities (Bianchi *et al.*, 2012; Guppy, Sakumoto and Wilkes, 2019) and changes in the value systems of Europeans that indicate a strong intensification of the principles of parity (Dush *et al.*, 2018), this gender inequality persists at the international level (OECD, 2020; ISSP, 2012), even in countries with more egalitarian "gender regimes" and more considerable state institutional support, such as in Scandinavian countries (Adda, Dustmann and Stevens, 2017; Kleven, Landais

and Søggaard, 2019).

Together with the phenomena of “gender segregation” in the labour market and in organisations, as pointed out by several studies (e.g., Pan, 2015; Cha, 2013), the assignment of domestic work contributes towards the wage gap and towards the persistence of the glass ceiling and glass wall phenomena, since the association of women with housework leads to reduced opportunities to invest time or focus on paid work activities and hierarchical mobility (Torres, 2004; Kellerhals *et al.*, 1982; De Singly, 1987), especially in activities performed under the aegis of “total commitment”.

Although it is a reasonable prediction that the shifts toward parity could lead to a disappearance of the inequalities over time, it is important to note that the growth of the equality trend appears to have slowed or even stalled since the end of the 20th century (England, Levine and Mishel, 2020; Milkie, Wray and Boeckmann, 2021) and several authors (Arulampalam, Booth and Bryan, 2007; Hook, 2006; Gupta, Smith and Verner, 2006; Bryson, 2007; Zamberlan, Gioachin and Gritti, 2021) have emphasised that its reduction has been much slower than expected. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that a given development trend cannot be reversed, at least in different sociopolitical contexts. For example, “radical populist right” movements and political parties have significantly increased in number and electoral success in Europe (Mudde, 2018), and in most cases these entities promote a return to a traditional concept of family with distinct roles. It should also be added that the gender gap in unpaid work is usually measured by comparing the number of hours men and women spend on housework or the type of tasks performed. However, the literature highlights that the energy and cognitive engagement put into tasks, particularly in terms of assessment, planning, and monitoring (Daminger, 2019; Robinson and Milkie, 1998), is genderised – the typical hour of housework is generally “denser” for women (Milkie, Wray and Boeckmann, 2021).

In short, we believe that the idea that inequalities in the distribution of housework will disappear over time should be taken with caution. Although it is likely, it is not inexorable and can be thwarted by situations of stabilisation or even reversal.

1. Theories about inequalities in the allocation of domestic work

Social sciences have developed several theories that have an undeniable potential to answer this question, three of which stand out. First the “time availability perspective” (Stafford, Backman and Dibona, 1977). This

hypothesis assumes that the unequal distribution of housework is the result of rational evaluations made by couples according to the different degrees of time available to each partner, considering the time invested in paid work (Bianchi *et al.*, 2000; Gough and Killewald, 2011; Voßemer and Heyne, 2019). In a rational logic of trade-off between the two spheres (Coverman, 1985), the consequence is that, on average, women devote more time to housework because they dedicate less time to paid work. The second theory is commonly referred to as the “relative resource perspective” (Becker, 1991; Brines, 1994; Ross, 1987). This perspective views the division of unpaid work as a function of the different resources of each partner, which, in turn, are reflected in distinct levels of power within the family relationship. The fact that men, on average, have greater economic resources, i.e., higher salaries, allows them to reduce the amount of time they devote to domestic work, which is seen as a less desirable activity (Geist and Ruppanner, 2018). Both theories have raised several criticisms, which are collated and detailed by Geist and Ruppanner (2018) or Carlson, Petts and Pepin (2021).

The third type of explanation, heavily influenced by feminist perspectives, places the issue of “gender ideologies” at the centre of the analysis. Overall, theories of “gender ideologies” have produced an extensive and diverse legacy with the common thread of attributing vital importance to the ideological factor in explaining inequalities in the gender division of labour (e.g., Ferree, 1990; Greenstein, 1996). Gender is viewed as a structural condition that shapes policy, labour markets, individual behaviour, and perspectives on behaviour. Such a structure “pushes women into domestic roles and men into the public sphere”. One of the most influential approaches of this third type emphasises the issue of social roles, assuming that there is a set of beliefs and stereotypes associated with social role differences passed on through socialisation. This socialisation is based on heteronormative cisgender roles that associate women with domestic work and men with paid work outside the home.

Although we defend that the scientific approach, whenever possible, is to unify the three theories, or others that have demonstrated explanatory potential to explain the phenomenon, into a single analytic model, our goal here is simply to explain and highlight, after analysing the results obtained, a hypothesis that falls within the perspective of “gender ideology”, whose importance in explaining inequalities in the distribution of domestic work is considerable but has not been sufficiently highlighted or empirically evaluated.

2. Objectives

We believe that one possible way of observing to what extent inequalities in the allocation of domestic work will endure or whether they will inexorably vanish is to analyse whether they persist among two populations in which the ideals of parity are notably present and whose demographic weight in relative terms has been increasing. We refer in the first place to the part of the population with tertiary education, mostly forming part of the “new middle classes”. In addition to the fact that this is the portion of the population in which women have more domestic bargaining power due to their higher levels of economic capital, it is also the category with greater exposure to ideas of parity associated with cultural capital. Data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) regarding “Attitudes towards Family and Gender Roles” confirm this assumption.

The second population with a more egalitarian cultural orientation is the younger population. Indeed, if we assume the idea that, with inflections, a civilisational drift from traditionalism to liberal egalitarianism is taking place, it would be in the younger populations that a more significant shift from situations of gender role asymmetry to the “support of absolute symmetry that underpins the dual-earner/dual-carer model” (Cunha and Atalaia, 2019) would occur. The younger population will play an increasingly key role as the generational change takes place and because of its role in the socialisation of the following generations.

As for the younger population, we have chosen to restrict the sample to the population under 35 years of age with ISCED 5-6, since this is a group particularly exposed to the parity model, as it combines the cultural effects generated by level of education and age. Once again, this idea was confirmed in all the ISSP items mentioned above.

This article has a twofold objective. First, it aims to explore the data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) to assess, in a clear-cut way, to what extent gender inequality in the allocation of household and care work remains, or not, in the two populations referred to above. We postulate that the elimination or loss of significance of inequalities in these segments indicates that these inequalities may disappear in the short term in the European context. On the contrary, if they persist, especially in the younger population with tertiary education, this calls attention to the fact that it is unlikely that these inequalities will be overcome in the near future and to the need to deepen the analysis of their persistence. We can foresee that inequality persists significantly even in these more ahead of the curve

segments, as we will demonstrate below.

This leads us to the second and most important objective of the paper: to outline a set of hypotheses which aim to contribute towards the effort of explaining the apparent persistence of inequalities in the allocation of domestic work, especially among the segments that culturally are in the best position to overcome them.

3. Results

The analyses are based on the ISSP, a “cross-national collaboration programme conducting annual surveys on diverse topics relevant to social sciences”. For this paper, the 2012 Family and Changing Gender Roles IV database was used (ISSP Research Group, 2016b), since it is the latest survey focusing on our topic of interest. A 2022 survey on the same topic is underway, but the results are not yet available. Given the structural nature of the dynamics under analysis, the data from 2012 can be a useful laboratory for the current exploratory analysis, even if it is based on the current sociopolitical context and state of the art.

Of the participating countries in ISSP 2012, only 24 European countries are included ($n = 32405$)¹. To correct the country subsample imbalance, a post-stratification weighting was applied (ISSP Research Group, 2016b). The questionnaire comprised different sets of questions, but we were particularly interested in the “Actual Division of Unpaid Work”, “Gendered Division of Household Work” and “Power and Decision-making within Partnership”. Only people currently living with a spouse or partner responded to the questions.

Different statistics are presented according to the measurement level of the variable and the aim of the analysis: descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests, and adjusted standardised residuals. Mann-Whitney tests were also performed due to the violation of the normality distribution assumption of the quantitative variables.

First, let us observe the variables related to the average time men and women with tertiary education who live with a partner spend on household work and family members. We compare this segment with the general population so that it is possible to determine whether, although they are not disappearing, the practical inequalities in the allocation of unpaid work time are decreasing among the population with ISCED 5-6, and coincide with an

1 Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Russia and Turkey were not integrated due to their intercontinental nature.

increase in the advocacy of the idea of equality found there.

The well-known inequality between women and men in the general population in terms of unpaid work is clear (data not shown due to length constraints). Women spend significantly more time than men both on housework ($U = 73647034.5$, $p < 0.001$) and on caring for family members ($U = 97479221.5$, $p < 0.001$). Men spend only 56.7% of the time women spend on housework and 56.2% on caring for family members. Inequalities exist in all the countries considered and are significant in both aspects, except in the case of Sweden with respect to the hours spent on family members, where they remain insignificant.

If we now consider only the segment with tertiary education, we can see that inequalities persist, although they are decreasing, in relation to housework. In fact, the time that men spend on these tasks corresponds to 63.3% of the time women spend. This reduction is due to the reinforcement of the idea of parity, but also the more significant presence of women in the labour market among individuals with tertiary education, as well as the greater recourse to external domestic work, due to their greater financial capacity. Thus, the volume of housework performed by the household has decreased. Curiously, the reduction in inequality is practically non-existent when considering the time spent on family members.

The ISSP data on family members do not allow us to distinguish children from dependent adults, who are the subject of care. However, our hypothesis is that the almost inexistent reduction of inequality found in this domain among individuals with ISCED 5-6 is due to the style of parenting characteristic of the new middle classes (classes where most of the individuals with tertiary education are found), a style of parenting codified by Annette Lareau (2003) through the concept of "concerted cultivation". In fact, one of the fundamental aspects that marks this parenting pattern, that Lareau found in the US but which we consider to be applicable to Europe as well, is that it involves intense intervention in promoting and organising children's extracurricular activities. This involves both parents, with consequences in the amount of time that each of them reserves for accompanying their children.

In short, the data allow us to conclude that there is significant inequality between men and women in terms of time spent on unpaid work, even in the more highly educated population; that inequality in housework is lower among the more highly educated than in the population as a whole, but that inequality in relation to time spent on family members is practically identical.

The comparison between countries is not relevant for the purposes of this analysis. Other studies have sought to understand these patterns in national differences (Crompton, Lewis and Lyonette, 2007; Wall and Escobedo, 2013). Nevertheless, we examined the data and found that they exist, with considerably different intensities, in all countries, both in housework activities and in time spent on family members.

Let us now consider, taking into account only the population with higher education, how inequalities are distributed by different specific tasks of unpaid work.

We observe that inequalities between women and men in housework are also relevant in the population with ISCED 5-6 (data not shown due to length constraints). This fact becomes evident in the relationship between the different variables regarding specific tasks of unpaid work and gender, as inferred through Chi-square tests. Women are significantly associated with the fulfilment (“always” or “usually”) of all activities, except for “minor repairs”, which continue to be a male domain. “Shopping for groceries” is the activity in which sharing is more significant. Activities such as “household cleaning”, “preparing meals” and above all “doing the laundry” are overwhelmingly done by females, with a clear minority reporting parity in their fulfilment.

Let us focus on the individuals with higher education who are under 35 years of age (Table 1), comparing them with the general population with the same level of education (data not shown due to length constraints).

The average number of hours per week that both household members dedicate to housework is lower in the younger population than in the total population. However, the differences between the members are not very significant – the percentage of time that men spend on housework compared to the time spent by women is 64.3% in the population under 35 years of age with tertiary education (it is 63.3% in the total population with the same level of education). Conversely, the difference in time spent on family members is more significant in the population under 35 years of age than in the total population with ISCED 5-6. The men’s hourly contribution corresponds to 53.6% of the women’s participation (56.4% in the total population). This fact could be the result of the greater prevalence, in the younger population, of children at pre-school age or those with less autonomy, with responsibility for their care falling to a greater extent on women.

TABLE 1. INEQUALITY IN SHARING UNPAID WORK (DOMESTIC WORK AND CARE FOR FAMILY MEMBERS) BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN WITH HIGHER EDUCATION AND UNDER 35 YEARS OF AGE

	N	MEAN	SD	MRk	MANN-WHITNEY U	P-VALUE
<i>How many hours spent on housework</i>					686767.5	0.000
Men	1134	6.67	6.17	1172.68		
Women	1573	10.37	9.23	1598.00		
<i>How many hours spent on family members</i>					775991.0	0.000
Men	1134	8.95	15.82	1249.94		
Women	1573	16.69	25.07	1456.61		

However, when we observe in more detail the specific tasks performed (Table 2), we find that the responses that indicate greater parity and sharing of tasks, whether in terms of housework or caring for other people, are in all cases more significant in the population under 35 years of age, whether the respondent is a man or a woman. In any case, it should be emphasised that, even when we consider the youngest socio-demographic segment (the most progressive in terms of the concretisation of ideas of parity), inequalities regarding the division of specific tasks persist and continue to be highly significant, especially those related to more routinised work. Only “shopping for groceries” is, for most of the households, carried out in an equal manner (54% refer that it is “about equal or both together”), with few differences between men and women.

The differences continue to be reported in the activities of care. For most of the respondents (53.8%), the task of caring for sick family members is performed about equally or both together, but if we consider only those who state that they perform it “Always” or “Usually”, it is 6 times higher in the case of women.

Decision-making about raising children is the one category in which parity increases more clearly compared to the total population with ISCED 5-6. Among individuals under 35 years of age, the percentage of those considering it to be a joint or alternated decision rises to 81.3%. However, this must be taken with caution because when we consider only those who answer “Mostly me”, this response rises to 21.9% in the case of women, while not exceeding 0.6% in the case of men. In other words, the number of women who consider that they make most of the decisions about their children is 37 times higher than the number of men who think the same.

TABLE 2. INEQUALITY IN SHARING SPECIFIC UNPAID WORK TASKS AND DECISION-MAKING REGARDING AGGREGATE ACTIVITIES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN WITH HIGHER EDUCATION AND UNDER 35 YEARS OF AGE

		MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL
		Z	%	Z	%	
Doing the laundry $\chi^2 (5) = 747.00, p < .001$	Always me	-15.9	3.9%	15.9	39.0%	25.1%
	Usually me	-12.3	6.7%	12.3	32.8%	22.5%
	About equal or both together	2.3	26.0%	-2.3	21.1%	23.0%
	Usually my spouse/partner	16.4	34.5%	-16.4	3.9%	16.0%
	Always my spouse/partner	15.5	27.1%	-15.5	1.6%	11.7%
	Is done by a third person	0.3	1.7%	-0.3	1.5%	1.6%
Minor repairs $\chi^2 (5) = 1044.99, p < .001$	Always me	19.6	37.7%	-19.6	1.2%	15.9%
	Usually me	19.6	44.4%	-19.6	4.3%	20.4%
	About equal or both together	-3.3	11.5%	3.3	17.6%	15.1%
	Usually my spouse/partner	-17.9	2.5%	17.9	42.6%	26.5%
	Always my spouse/partner	-14.3	1.4%	14.3	29.5%	18.2%
	Is done by a third person	-2.3	2.5%	2.3	4.8%	3.9%
Caring for sick family members $\chi^2 (5) = 315.06, p < .001$	Always me	-5.2	3.2%	5.2	11.6%	8.3%
	Usually me	-11.4	3.8%	11.4	30.7%	20.2%
	About equal or both together	2.6	58.5%	-2.6	50.9%	53.8%
	Usually my spouse/partner	13.7	26.1%	-13.7	1.1%	10.8%
	Always my spouse/partner	3.8	4.0%	-3.8	0.8%	2.0%
	Is done by a third person	-0.4	4.4%	0.4	5.0%	4.7%
Shopping for groceries χ^2 non reliable	Always me	-6.1	3.3%	6.1	11.9%	8.4%
	Usually me	-6.0	15.0%	6.0	27.7%	22.6%
	About equal or both together	1.6	56.4%	-1.6	52.3%	54.0%
	Usually my spouse/partner	6.9	18.4%	-6.9	7.1%	11.7%
	Always my spouse/partner	6.4	6.7%	-6.4	0.9%	3.2%
	Is done by a third person	1.2	0.2%	-1.2	0.0%	0.1%
Household cleaning $\chi^2 (5) = 579.37, p < .001$	Always me	-9.8	1.1%	9.8	16.1%	10.1%
	Usually me	-14.8	7.0%	14.8	40.3%	27.0%
	About equal or both together	2.2	39.4%	-2.2	34.0%	36.2%
	Usually my spouse/partner	17.3	36.1%	-17.3	3.5%	16.6%
	Always my spouse/partner	9.3	12.1%	-9.3	1.2%	5.6%
	Is done by a third person	-0.4	4.3%	0.4	4.8%	4.6%

Preparing meals $\chi^2 (5) = 280.73, p < .001$	Always me	-8.4	4.7%	8.4	19.2%	13.4%
	Usually me	-7.9	18.8%	7.9	37.1%	29.8%
	About equal or both together	0.6	31.8%	-0.6	30.3%	30.9%
	Usually my spouse/partner	10.3	29.9%	-10.3	9.8%	17.9%
	Always my spouse/partner	9.5	14.4%	-9.5	2.1%	7.0%
	Is done by a third person	-1.9	0.5%	1.9	1.4%	1.1%
Final say: Choosing weekend activities $\chi^2 (4) = 33.49, p < .001$	Mostly me	-3.3	6.7%	3.3	11.7%	9.7%
	Mostly my spouse/partner	4.7	10.6%	-4.7	4.5%	6.9%
	Sometimes me/sometimes partner	0.8	30.8%	-0.8	28.9%	29.7%
	We decide together	-1.0	51.9%	1.0	54.6%	53.5%
	Someone else	-1.4	0.0%	1.4	0.3%	0.2%
Who makes decisions on how to raise kids χ^2 non reliable	Mostly me	-8.8	0.6%	8.8	21.9%	14.1%
	Mostly my spouse/partner	7.2	11.1%	-7.2	0.7%	4.5%
	Sometimes me/sometimes partner	1.9	15.4%	-1.9	11.0%	12.6%
	We decide together	1.9	72.6%	-1.9	66.4%	68.7%
	Someone else	1.3	0.3%	-1.3	0.0%	0.1%

Note: Values are expressed as adjusted standardised residuals and percentage within gender. Bold denotes statistical significance ($|Z| > 1.96$; level of significance of 0.05) with a positive effect: the observed frequency is greater than the expected frequency.

4. Discussion and proposal of an explanatory hypothesis

The analytical problem we face in this study is the following: how can we explain that inequalities in the distribution of unpaid work between men and women are so evident, even if we only look at social segments in which the parity cultural model is robust?

Our aim is only to propose an explanatory hypothesis that falls under the theories of “gender ideology”. We do so because we believe that, despite its importance, it has so far not merited due theoretical explanation nor enough empirical testing, so it is essential to create the conditions for that to happen in the future. We consider that the hypothesis becomes even more relevant in cases where inequalities persist in contexts where individuals claim to advocate and believe in the egalitarian model. In other words, when we are faced with a situation characterised by a considerable mismatch between discourses and beliefs and practices.

The general hypothesis is that several relevant aspects of the male-breadwinner-female-homemaker model (Vitali and Arpino, 2016), which was very prominent among the post-war middle classes, also in European

countries, persist in a significant way at the cultural level, often among segments that intensely contest it. We will refer to this model as the “modified male breadwinner”, using an expression used by Altintas and Sullivan (2017) to refer to continued inequality in the allocation of domestic work in the United Kingdom, despite the massive participation of women in the labour market.

The predominant features of the modified male breadwinner model differ from the form they took in the traditional model in two key respects. First, they assume a more mitigated and less articulated form than in the past (insofar as they clash with and are permeated by the beliefs and mandates established by the egalitarian model). Second, they do not emerge consciously. They are instead manifested and operate at a non-conscious level (Bourdieu, 1998; Peterson, 2008); we could say “subterranean”, so they should be observed mainly in relational and interpersonal practices, expectations, and judgments, and not precisely in values or discourses expressed in an explicit and conscious form.

What we state here does not mean that new models of family and new ways for men to approach work and fatherhood different from those of the “traditional masculinity model” (Brandth and Kvande, 2002; Williams, 2009; Santos, 2010) – often deliberately used as a mark of rejection of heteronormative gendered expectations (Geist and Ruppner, 2018, p. 13) – do not have a considerable and probably growing importance. It does mean that the presence of these models and the solid discursive diffusion of egalitarian values have led too radically to the idea that the male breadwinner model is outdated and thus almost totally lacking in analytical potential.

5. Deployment of the general hypothesis

We present the aspects of the modified male breadwinner model in the form of four sub-hypotheses to facilitate their future testing in empirical research, culminating in a suggestion regarding a more appropriate methodology for assessing them.

1) In line with the assumptions of the Sex Roles Theory (e.g., Coverman, 1985) – especially if they were rectified by the pertinent criticisms put forward by authors such as Ferree (1990), namely those deriving from the perspective of “doing gender” – we believe that *internalised socialising mandates that continue to unequally endow boys and girls with skills, knowledge, and dispositional characteristics favourable to the domestic space persist*. Although less explicit, more attenuated, and less widespread,

these socialising prescriptions endure and produce significant effects on the sharing of unpaid work in the adult phase, even if they are not sufficient to cancel out the tensions and conflicts experienced both at a relational level within the couple (Amato and Booth, 1995; Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991), and at the individual and internal levels for each partner (Santos, 2010; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). We hypothesise that these aspects also contribute towards explaining why women spend, on average, more time than men on housework, even when they are single, and the same can be said for couples in which the woman is the breadwinner (Brines, 1994; Evertsson and Nermo, 2004; Flèche, Lapinteur and Powdthavee, 2020).

These elements of socialisation must be sought in family and peer contexts and later in organisational contexts (Benschop, 2006; Ferree, 1990). The media also favour the naturalisation of the domestic vocation. For example, the large-scale and insistent dissemination of the sexist prototype of the male warrior and the woman in the rear, looking for a new home and carrying children, in the case of the Ukraine war, refers to a traditional model, which may have an impact on the new generations.

Such arrangements also contribute towards men and women having distinct mental loads reserved for domestic work (Daminger, 2019; Robertson, Anderson and Hall, 2019). Indeed, as has been shown, women's involvement in this type of work encompasses far more the largely invisible cognitive components required to perform it (Daly, 2001; Doan and Quadlin, 2019; Doucet, 2015), namely anticipation of needs, planning, evaluation, and monitoring (Milkie, Wray and Boeckmann, 2021).

2) *As a result of external and internal expectations, there is a greater dependence of men on paid work to obtain dignity and social recognition (e.g., Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1987), either by keeping a job – in the case of men, this is essential – or, subsequently, by striving to improve their professional status.* It is challenging to find evidence for the idea that the family's subsistence is the exclusive responsibility of the man, a characteristic of the traditional male breadwinner – a characteristic that, as Ferree (1990) shows, has not been a constant in historical terms, nor had the same predominance in all societies and social classes. However, the feeling of indignity and shame when the sustenance or economic well-being of the family is at stake affects the male figure in particular. In marital relationships, some men even consider that their honour is only really assured when their professional status, measured in terms of salary or symbolic value, is higher than that of women.

These findings are also present in Rao's (2020) study of American families. The condition of unemployment takes on more moral contours for men than for women. The demands of seeking and securing a new job are felt by unemployed men in the context of the marital relationship, sometimes in a suffocating manner, lest they be considered lazy or unmotivated. As Rao notes, an "obsession with finding a job is not reducible to financial necessity; it is driven by a sense that enduring unemployment marks a departure from the expectations of White masculinity" (2020, p. 212).

In many cases, these hetero and self-expectations produce men oriented towards total commitment to work (willingness to extend the working day, to accommodate schedule changes, etc.) to the detriment of the family sphere. Cognitive and emotional availability to engage in the costly economy of affections, which is unpredictable, demanding and, when it involves children, omnipresent, tend to be reduced.

It is well known that men's unwillingness to do domestic work is reinforced in the context of organisations. Their willingness to accept, for example, absenteeism or lack of investment in work to ensure childcare is considered "abnormal" and is often not tolerated.

3). *In contrast to the previous point, expectations regarding women's investment in paid work are historically weaker and, in many cases, national and class-based, discouraged and censored* (e.g. Beauvoir, 1949; Ghodsee, 2018). Consequently, it is reasonable to think that, in many cases, their symbolic dependence on paid work tends to be lower insofar as failures in this sphere are not reflected so permanently and forcefully in situations and feelings of dishonour and shame (Rao, 2020). The probability of moderating investment in work, channelling time and attention to the "domestic world", especially when the issue of motherhood is at stake, tends to be more significant and may materialise in a reduction in paid working time. This fact does not prevent women from taking on most of the domestic work without separating themselves, at least in terms of hours, from paid work – see the well-documented "double shift", a situation of accumulation that has been increasing. Nor does it prevent women who develop demanding professional careers from being confronted with hetero- and self-expectations to develop exceptional performances in many domestic and non-domestic areas. The scale and social segments in which these additional demands occur should be studied.

4) *There continues to be more significant social pressure on women to do domestic work*, insofar as the symbolic weight of a disorganised

domestic space falls most heavily on them, especially not properly looking after children or ascendants. Being a “good woman” implies having, vis-à-vis domestic work, a much more committed and less optional attitude (Davis and Greenstein, 2020; Doan and Quadlin, 2019), in part because the standards of care and cleanliness placed upon them are higher than those of men and are seen by others and themselves as insufficient (Thébaud, Kornrich and Ruppanner, 2019). Nevertheless, it is, above all, during motherhood that the pressure is felt. Thus, we fully subscribe to Evertson and Boye’s (2015, p. 5) statement: “Motherhood is accompanied by an expectation of self-sacrifice that tends to be associated with feelings of guilt. To be a ‘good’ mother, and ultimately a ‘real’ woman, a mother is expected to structure her life around her children and to forgo any activities that might benefit her, such as paid work and leisure, if these are not beneficial to her children” (see also Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson, 2001; Miller, 2007). The best demonstration of the naturalisation of the mother’s role is perhaps to be found in the well-documented tendency in all European countries for women to take parental leave for all or most of the time it is granted, even though the law does not make any gender discrimination in this respect.

Also, in organisations, we often find the persistence of naturalistic conceptions about the unequal division of labour between men and women. The latter are associated with the private sphere (Benschop, 2006; Ferree, 1990), to which they are considered to be linked by vocation or natural constraints, especially after having children.

We would like to conclude the explanation of these hypotheses with a brief methodological note, since their exploration and empirical testing require the use of appropriate research protocols. Indeed, it is important to reinforce that the remaining aspects of the male-breadwinner-female-homemaker model operate through infra-discursive and infra-conscious cognitive processes (Peterson, 2008; Reskin, 2000; Valian, 1999), and it is not easy to find statements that oppose the categorically expressed parity model (Peterson, 2008). In this sense, we do not believe exhaustive surveys or interviews conducted in a formal context are the most appropriate methods for bringing them to light. Instead, we suggest, on the one hand, the ethnographic method, with participant observation protocols aimed at the continuous observation of practices and relationships in a family context (Lareau, 2003, or, specifically on these issues, Rao, 2020); on the other hand, the “Implicit Association Tests” (Greenwald, McGhee and Schwartz, 1998) used by cognitive psychology, as proposed by Peterson (2008), which may or may not be combined with in-depth interviews.

Conclusion

The exploratory proposal we have presented in this paper stems from the observation that gender inequalities persist in the distribution of unpaid work, not only among the general population but also in two large sociodemographic segments of this population that are particularly ahead of the curve in relation to the parity model. This observation draws attention to the absolute relevance of continuing in-depth research into the persistence of inequalities, especially if we consider the contemporary mismatch between the advocacy of egalitarian principles and their complete practical application.

In order to contribute towards this objective, this article draws attention to the importance of taking due account of the cultural survival, even in a mitigated, modified, and diffuse form, of some aspects that characterise the male-breadwinner-female-homemaker model by testing them empirically through the selection of appropriate methodologies.

Some aspects of the survival of this model have been pointed out more frequently in the literature, such as the persistence of internalised socialising pressures and mandates that continue to endow boys and girls with skills and knowledge unequally, but above all with dispositional characteristics favourable to the domestic space and domestic work, especially clear in the domain of care and the supervision of children and ascendants. Others need to be underlined because we consider them to have greater analytical relevance than is usually granted. These aspects can be summarised in the idea that, due to the prevalence of an “androcentric career model” (Lewis, 2010), external expectations and expectations that focus on men, tend to make their dignity and social recognition more heavily dependent on paid work than is the case for women. This fact leads them to develop dispositions that make it more likely that they will prolong the working day and reserve maximum availability and attention for their professional lives (Cunha and Atalaia, 2019), disinvesting, both in terms of time and attention and cognitive engagement, from the domestic and caregiving sphere. Essentially, we believe that this proposal reinforces the idea advocated by Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977), in her work from more than four decades ago, that the spheres of paid work and domestic work influence each other mutually and cannot be studied separately².

² The authors intend to revisit this article in the light of the 2022 ISSP data when it is published, analysing to what extent there may have been changes in the patterns recorded, and to what extent they may have been affected by the lockdowns resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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