

Household Work in the UK: An Analysis of the British Household Panel Survey 1994

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ABSTRACT This paper examines the organisation and performance of household work among dual earner couples of working age. Utilising data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) 1994 the research employs linear modelling techniques in order to model the variables associated with both the time spent on household work and the sharing of household work between men and women living together. In particular, household circumstances and characteristics of partners are considered as independent variables. The findings show that the time men and women spend in paid employment, their partners' time in paid employment, economic power, attitudes, social class and presence of children emerge as variables significantly associated with the two measures of household work performance. The explained variation for time spent on household work is also much higher for women than men. The results show that women continue to carry a 'dual burden' of paid and unpaid work which disadvantages them in terms of employment, income and welfare.

Background

Family policy research has recently investigated the issue of reconciling family and employment responsibilities (Avre-Pares 1995; Bayley *et al.* 1995; Ditch *et al.* 1994a and 1994b; UN International Year of the Family 1994; United Nations 1996) and as such has shown some interest in the domestic division of labour (DDOL). However, this interest has primarily been directed at families with children.

This paper will focus on household work but does not include childcare. Therefore, couples without children (as well as those with them) come into the focus of research and household work is the specific focus of attention rather than childcare.

Previous research into this topic has concluded that women still bear the major share of household work (Berk 1985; Gershuny 1992; Goodnow 1989; Horrell 1994;

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Meisser *et al.* 1988). However, there has been little consensus about which variables are associated with the division and performance of this work. This paper provides an up-to-date analysis of the current organisation of household work in dual-earner households and variables associated with this using British data (British Household Panel Survey 1994). The implications for families, their members and society are discussed in the light of the findings.

There are a number of reasons why existing research has failed to reach a consensus about what variables are linked to the division and performance of household work among couples. Firstly, a number of different measures of 'household work' are used as the dependent variable. These include the total number of hours spent on housework (Gershuny *et al.* 1994; Horrell 1994; Warde and Hetherington 1993; Baxter 1992; Ironmonger and Sonius 1989; Meissner *et al.* 1988; Pleck 1985; Berk 1985); proportional measures of housework (i.e. how work is shared between partners) (Gershuny *et al.* 1994; Baxter 1992; Wheelock 1990; Ross 1987; Pahl 1984; Ericksen *et al.* 1979; Clark *et al.* 1978), and, occasionally, the number of household tasks actually performed (Berk 1985). However, within each of these there are variations in how these measures are arrived at and each measure gives different results on housework performance. Undoubtedly, 'Some of the disagreement about domestic division of labour ... arises because we still lack adequate ways of conceptualising and contextualising housework' (Warde and Hetherington 1993: 43).

Secondly, a wide range of independent variables has been utilised in order to explain household work and it is also 'the different operationalisations of perspectives in terms of independent variables that produce widely varying conclusions' (Ross 1987:818). In addition, researchers have drawn on widely different sources of data (e.g. Time Use surveys, a range of national surveys and their own uniquely designed surveys) that originate from different countries (generally, the United States, Australia and the UK). The main variables which have been examined in relation to household work performance and division among couples include the following: female employment and male unemployment; income and economic power; social class; attitudes, and presence of children. These independent variables are now further explained.

Female employment and male unemployment

Much of the literature on the division of labour in the home has explored this issue in relation to the labour market activity of men's and women's partners, particularly the fact of women's increasing labour market participation and, to a lesser extent, men's rising unemployment rates. The implication has been that household tasks are allocated on the basis of the amount of time available to each partner (Ross 1987; Young and Willmott 1973; Bloode and Wolfe 1960; Gershuny *et al.* 1994). So, for instance, if men do little work in the home it is because their time is taken up in paid employment, sometimes referred to as the 'breadwinner trap' (Baxter 1992:166).

Research does indicate that there is a more egalitarian distribution of household work in households when women are working longer hours (Gurshuny *et al.* 1994) or when women are working and their husbands are unemployed (Wheelock 1990). However, these proportional measures conceal how actual time is used by men and women and findings examining time use present a rather different picture. These suggest women do much less household work when they are in employment but that these women's overall paid and unpaid workload is greater than men's (Pleck 1985:44; Horrell 1994:213). Where proportional measures find that there is greater sharing in households when women are working it may actually be due to women reducing the time they spend on household work rather than any increases in the household work performed by men. The evidence for the breadwinner trap is mixed. While Clark *et al.* (1978) found men's paid work hours were not related to the time they spent on household work, Baxter (1992) did find a relationship. However, neither Clark *et al.* (1978) nor Baxter (1992) considered that the working hours of men's partners might have an effect on the time men spend on household work.

Further, Speakman and Marchington argue that 'both quantitative and qualitative data finds very weak evidence to support this correlation [equal distribution of housework is more likely where there is a more equal distribution of paid work activity], there is an underpinning assumption that it *ought to be so*' (Speakman and Marchington, 1999:84, *original emphasis*).

Income and economic power

Some research has argued that an individual's income (usually among other variables) can be seen as a component of marital power (Baxter 1992; Ericksen *et al.* 1979; Oakley 1974). So those with greater resources (e.g. income, status etc.) have greater social power and can compel those with fewer resources (and less power) to undertake the 'onerous' work of the household (Berk 1985:14). Ericksen *et al.* (1979) attempted to explain the DDOL more explicitly in terms of marital power using husband's income and wife's education as a measure of the relative status between partners. They find that 'the best predictor of husband's assistance with housework is his success as an income provider. High income husbands are considerably less likely to do housework than lower income husbands' (Ericksen *et al.* 1979:310) and that 'the higher the wives status, relative to her husband, the more likely she is to work outside the home, and the more likely he is to perform tasks in the home' (Ericksen *et al.* 1979:311).

Baxter, using a measure of the relative economic contribution of individuals to the household, found that in terms of both the division of household work and total housework time, the earnings gap between husbands and wives is significant for both men and women. Higher economic contributions are associated with individuals doing a lower share and also spending less time on housework. However, this effect was stronger for men in both cases. So this research suggests that the greater the

economic power of men the less likely they are to share in household work (Baxter 1992:175 and 177). This pattern was also found in Ross' research (Ross 1987:827).

Higher household income has been linked to increasing use of waged domestic labour which in turn may have an impact on the DDOL (Gregson and Lowe 1994).

The employment of a cleaner ... is both more likely to involve a major change in the between partners form of the domestic division of labour than a nanny, and more likely to be employed by dual career households with traditional and/or conventionally shared between partners domestic division of labour than by households with fully shared divisions of labour. (Gregson and Lowe 1994: 73)

Social class

Some research on working class life (e.g. Dennis *et al.* 1956) suggests there is much sex-segregation in working-class communities. Similarly, Young and Willmott (1973) found increased 'jointness' in middle-class couples with a greater sharing of conjugal roles. However, Morris' review of the link between social class and the performance of household work reveals contradictions between the research on this issue (Morris 1990). There is little recent research explicitly exploring the issue of social class in relation to household work performance, although Fern and Smith (1996) have examined how occupational roles affect fathers' involvement in childcare.

Goode (in Morris 1990) suggests that social class can be interpreted as a reflection of power within the household.

Towards the lower strata, the husband is more likely to claim authority simply because he is male, but actually has to concede more authority to his wife. Towards the upper strata men are less likely to assert the values of patriarchal authority, but in action manage to have more power anyway. (Goode quoted in Morris 1990:99)

Attitudes

More liberal attitudes among men and women in couples appear to be associated with a more egalitarian distribution of housework (Pleck 1985). However, it has also been found that men's attitudes are more important than women's (Baxter 1992; Ross 1987). However, the interaction of the attitudes of both partners may also be important (Greenstein 1996).

Children

Presence of children in the household has been found to lead to a more 'traditional' domestic division of labour in the home (Berk 1985; Baxter 1992; Gershuny *et al.* 1995; Pahl 1984) and having children also appears to generate a greater total household workload. Baxter (1992) indicates that this extra workload is borne by women and this could also explain why the DDOL also appears to become more unequal with the presence of children.

This section has briefly reviewed the existing research that has examined the organisation and performance of household work between men and women living in couples. However, in the literature as a whole there has been little consensus about which are the most important variables and sometimes even the nature of the effect that these variables have on the organisation of household work. The research that is presented in this paper adds to the existing research in the field by providing a more comprehensive and systematic analysis of the subject. It does this in four ways: (1) by taking a wider range of dependent variables than has been previously examined in any one research exercise and comparing them to determine which variables best explain household work performance. (2) Examining *both* time spent on household work *and* the level of sharing of this work between couples and considering the time spent on household work for *both* men and women separately in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of household work performance. (3) The research presented here is based on relatively up-to-date (1994) data, and; (4) it is based on British data. This is important since some of the more interesting and comprehensive research on household work has been based on Australian or American data (e.g. Baxter 1992; Ross 1987; Pleck 1985). In addition, this research is the first to include a measure of economic power using British data. Both the working hours of men *and* their female partners are included in the analysis for the first time. This is to give an indication of the effect of how individuals respond to their partner's available time. Importantly, this analysis also links men and women within the same households and therefore is able to examine how characteristics of partners affect an individual's performance of household work. Social class is a factor which has not been explored in relation to this issue recently and therefore a measure is also included for this.

Data

The data used comes from Wave 4 (1994) of the British Household Panel survey (BHPS). The BHPS is a longitudinal household survey which annually surveys each adult member (age 16+) of a nationally representative sample of more than 5,000 households. The same individuals are re-interviewed in successive waves and, if they split off from the original households, all adult members of the new households are also interviewed. The survey produces data for each year from 1991 (Wave 1) onwards and covers diverse topics such as household circumstances, health, employment, earnings, consumption patterns, values and opinions, and household finances and organisation. It is currently funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and is run by the University of Essex.

In this paper, men and women of working age (eighteen to sixty-five years for men and eighteen to sixty years for women) who were both in paid employment and who were living with their partners were examined.¹ In the Wave 4 sample of the

BHPS, there were a total of 9,481 adults interviewed. Of these, just over half (50.7 per cent) were men and women of working age (eighteen to sixty years for women and eighteen to sixty-five years for men) who were living with their partners. Of these, the majority (65 per cent) lived in dual earner households (in which both partners were working). Eighty-four per cent of the dual earner couples were married, 51 per cent had dependent children living in the household and 34 per cent had no children living in the household.² The final analysis was carried out on 981 dual earner couples.³

Methodology

Three general linear models were fitted to the data in order to take account of the effects of both continuous and categorical variables on the dependent variables. The models were constructed for time (hours) spent on household work for men and women separately and for the level of sharing within households. (Estimated means for these models are attached in the appendix). All analyses were carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The different aspects of household work performance are firstly, *time spent on household work* (hours) per week. The BHPS includes a measure of estimated time spent by an individual on household work⁴ (excluding childcare) during a week. The log scale of this measure was used.⁵ The average mean number of hours spent by men and women in the sample on household work per week was five and seventeen respectively. See Table B in the Appendix for medians, standard deviations and quartile dispersions of these variables.

Secondly, the *level of sharing in the household*. This is calculated as the percentage of time spent by men on household work.⁶ Therefore, if sharing equals 50 per cent each partner spends the same amount of time on household work and there is an equal level of sharing occurring. If sharing is above 50 per cent, then some degree of 'role-reversal' is indicated, whereas the lower this figure, the more 'traditional' the DDOL. On average, men do around 24 per cent of the household work, indicating a generally low level of sharing between couples. See Table B in the Appendix for the median, standard deviation and quartile dispersion for this variable.

Independent variables

The following independent variables were entered into the models.

Covariate measures

Employment

In order to examine the effect of employment hours on the performance of domestic work, hours spent in paid work were entered into the models. In addition, a variable for partner's hours in paid work was also entered into the models in order to examine how individuals responded to their partner's available time. From these two

measures, we can also estimate how relative time available to both partners affects each other's contribution to household work. We are thus able to examine the effect of partners' paid work hours in relation to each other in a way that has not been attempted before.

Economic power

In order to measure the relative economic power between partners a variable was created to measure male income from employment as a proportion of the total earned household income.

Income gained from paid employment is independently earned and is considered as the most important contribution to household income indicating relative economic power (Joshi *et al.* 1995). Only a small portion of relatively recent studies have included a measure of economic power in models attempting to explain participation in household work. This is the first time a measure of economic power of this kind has been employed on British data.

Household income

A measure of the equivalised (before housing costs) household income was also entered into the models,⁷ since this variable reflects the possible standard of living of the household taking into account the extra costs incurred by different kinds of households (e.g. Number of children). This variable may also indicate the ability of households to 'buy in' domestic goods and services to replace their own time spent on household work.

Factors

Attitudes

While the BHPS asks a number of questions relating to attitudes towards gender roles, only one of these is asked in Wave 4. However, as this question asks respondents opinions about whether 'The man should be the head of the household', it is a pertinent variable for the purposes here – since it indicates respondents' attitudes towards traditional gender roles in relation to the household.

Presence of children

Three categories for presence of children in the household were identified: No children; dependent children (aged up to eighteen); and non-dependent children.⁸

Social class

In this analysis the Registrar General's Occupational social class classification is used as an indicator of social class.

Results

Models I and II: time (hours) spent on household work for men and women

Referring to Table 1, the model for women explains a greater portion of the variation (nearly 34 per cent) than does the model for men (7.5 per cent). Other

Table 1
Results for couples who are both in employment and have a recorded number of hours in employment Parameter estimates (B), standard errors (SE) and significance probabilities of regression variables and factors included in the models

	N	Model I			Model II			Model III		
		Male hours per week on housework (log scale)			Female hours per week on housework (log scale)			Percentage of housework done by male partner		
COVARIATES		B	SE	Sig.	B	SE	Sig.	B	SE	Sig.
Intercept		1.184	0.292	0.000	0.844	0.224	0.000	78.2	15.7	0.000
Power	981	-0.0025	0.001	0.011	0.0043	0.001	0.000	-0.263	0.052	0.000
Job hours (male)	981	-0.0029	0.001	0.027	0.0003	0.001	0.773	-0.115	0.072	0.109
Job hours (female)	981	0.0032	0.001	0.010	-0.0043	0.001	0.000	0.278	0.065	0.000
Log equivalent household income	981	-0.150	0.063	0.018	0.027	0.048	0.575	-10.5	3.39	0.002
FACTORS										
RG social class (male)										
				0.302			0.000			0.002
Professional	85	0.141	0.091		0.029	0.070		1.27	4.87	
Managerial and technical	338	0.100	0.086		0.063	0.066		-0.17	4.58	
Skilled non-manual	123	0.107	0.087		0.079	0.067		-0.17	4.58	
Skilled manual	319	0.058	0.084		0.132	0.064		-5.41	4.48	
Partly skilled	101	0.078	0.088		0.0176	0.067		-5.92	4.68	
Unskilled	15	0.000			0.000			0.000		
RG social class (female)										
				0.047			0.253			0.007
Professional	28	0.056	0.079		-0.086	0.061		6.95	4.24	
Managerial and technical	284	-0.037	0.051		-0.028	0.039		-2.12	2.73	
Skilled non-manual	406	0.017	0.046		-0.050	0.035		0.49	2.47	
Skilled manual	77	-0.079	0.056		-0.002	0.043		-4.35	3.00	
Partly skilled	126	-0.046	0.050		-0.007	0.038		-3.34	2.68	
Unskilled	60	0.000			0.000			0.000		

researchers have also found that their research explains a greater proportion of the variation for women than for men (Berk 1985). This finding may therefore suggest that women are more responsive to their particular individual and household

Table 1 – continued

	N	Model I			Model II			Model III		
		Male hours per week on housework (log scale)			Female hours per week on housework (log scale)			Percentage of housework done by male partner		
COVARIATES		B	SE	Sig.	B	SE	Sig.	B	SE	Sig.
Attitude: Man should be head of household (male)				0.029			0.007			0.002
Strongly disagree	104	0.202	0.067		-0.026	0.051		8.22	3.57	
Disagree	310	0.137	0.061		0.061	0.046		1.93	3.25	
Neither agreed or disagree	412	0.114	0.060		0.044	0.045		1.45	3.20	
Agree	125	0.120	0.064		0.085	0.049		-0.92	3.44	
Strongly agree	30	0.000			0.000			0.000		
Attitude: Man should be head of household (female)				0.003			0.017			0.000
Strongly disagree	259	0.150	0.080		-0.082	0.061		9.34	4.27	
Disagree	419	0.105	0.079		-0.031	0.060		4.70	4.20	
Neither agree or disagree	211	0.090	0.080		-0.054	0.061		4.53	4.26	
Agree	75	-0.012	0.085		0.017	0.065		-2.33	4.54	
Strongly agree	17	0.000			0.000			0.000		
Household Type				0.040			0.000			0.009
No children	385	-0.025	0.032		-0.165	0.024		4.71	1.70	
Dependent children	452	0.040	0.031		-0.006	0.024		1.45	1.68	
Non-dependent children	144	0.000			0.000			0.000		
Adjusted R ²				7.5%			33.8%			23%

circumstances in their performance of household work than are men. The level of variation explained is particularly low for men suggesting that men's time may be inelastic and not very responsive to their circumstances.

Longer hours in employment are associated with both men and women spending significantly shorter time on household work, although the level of significance and the relative impact on household work time is higher for women. There is therefore some limited support for the 'breadwinner trap', although given

the limited strength of the association and the low overall explained variation (R^2) in Model I, this must be a cautious conclusion.

Although the time women spend on household work was not significantly associated with their partners' time in paid work, the time men spend on household work increased significantly with longer hours spent at work by their partners. This suggests that men are, to some degree, taking up the slack in household work when their partners are working longer hours. This may be because, as Blood and Wolfe (1960) suggest, men feel compelled to do more in the home when their partners are working longer hours.

Increases in relative economic power for both men and women are significantly associated with doing less household work, therefore lending support to previous research findings (Baxter 1992; Ross 1987).

Higher equivalised household income was associated with men spending less time on household work, but was not significantly associated with variations in women's time on household work.

Mothers and fathers are both spending more time on household work than men and women with no children.

The attitudes of men to the statement 'The man should be the head of the household' were significantly associated with both the time these men *and* their partners spend on household work. Men are particularly liable to spend more time on household work where they disagreed with this statement. However, the pattern for the association of male attitudes to their partner's time on household work was less clear – only where the male partner strongly disagreed with the statement were his partner's household work hours depressed.

The attitude of women to the statement was also significantly associated with the time both themselves and their partners spend on household work. The partners of women who disagreed with this statement spent more time on household work, while the women themselves spend less time on household work.

The social classification of men does not have any significant effect on the time men spend on household work. However, this does affect the time their partners spend on household work. Generally, the lower the social class of the man the greater time his partner spends on household work.

Likewise, the social classification of women does not have any significant effect on the time women spend on household work but this does affect the time her male partner spends on household work. Men with partners in the professional class are spending more time on household work.

Model III: level of sharing in the household

Sharing in the household was not associated with the job hours of men but did significantly increase with greater female job hours.

We know from the previous models that women spend less time on household

work when they are working longer hours, and although men say they spend more time on household work when their partners are in employment, this analysis suggests that men are meeting only a small portion of the shortfall in household work left by women working.

Increasing levels of economic power of the man were significantly associated with decreases in the level of sharing within the household. Therefore, this supports the theory that relative economic power between partners has an important impact on household work time and sharing.

Increasing levels of equivalised household income are associated with decreases in the level of sharing and seem to be associated with less time spent on household work for men but not for women. This may be the effect of some higher income households employing waged domestic labour which is having the effect of substituting men's time on household work. This would be consistent with Gregson and Lowe's findings (1994). However, without data for actual waged domestic labour this conclusion has to remain speculation.

The models for time on household work showed that both men and women do more work in the home when they have dependent children living in the household. Sharing in the household decreases when dependent children are present therefore supporting the earlier suggestion that women take on the greater household work burden resulting from having children.

Men's and women's attitudes are both significantly associated with sharing. In particular, where men and women strongly disagree with the statement 'the man should be the head of the household', is associated with increased levels of sharing.

The social class of both men and women are significantly associated with sharing. Higher levels of men's social class were associated with increases in the level of household work sharing. Sharing also increased where the female partner occupied a professional social classification.

Discussion

This analysis of how different variables affect men's and women's time on household work and their reported level of sharing in the household has highlighted a number of important points.

It was suggested that women may be adopting a more 'rational' household work and employment strategy than men, since the amount of variation explained for women's time spent on household work was considerably greater than for men's time.

Variables that indicate characteristics of partners in relation to one another (a number of which were considered here: e.g. own job hours and partners job hours; economic power; attitudes; and social class) clearly indicate that individual and, particularly, household work performance is related to partner characteristics.

However, although couples are taking these variables into account (and women more so than men judging by the levels of explained variations for each model), the relatively low level of variation explained for levels of sharing in the household suggests that couples are not necessarily adopting a rational 'strategy' towards household work. Brannen and Moss (1991), in their study of dual earner families after maternity leave, found that 40 per cent of women in the couples reported that there had been no discussion of household strategy or tactics. Couples where the woman is returning to work after maternity leave may well be more likely to discuss household strategies than other couples due to their change in circumstances. How many couples not in this position have discussed the organisation of household work and how many review household strategies from time to time? The results of this research suggest that if any household work organisation has actually been discussed and agreed between couples, its application is vague and imperfect or maybe is subject to many more extraneous variables than could be considered in an analysis of this nature. However, there are still variables that this research has identified as being important in determining the time spent on household work and the levels of reported household sharing.

Although the research findings do lend some support to the notion that household work hours are related to the amount of 'free' time available to individuals, women's job hours are more important in determining the overall level of sharing in the home.

This research found support for previous research that found relative economic power (in terms of couples' contributions to total earned household income) to be important in determining time on household work and the level of sharing.

The attitudes of both partners were found to be associated with household work performance. Baxter (1992) and Ross (1987) found that only men's attitudes were significantly associated with household work performance and concluded that men's attitudes were more important in facilitating greater egalitarian arrangements in the home than women's attitudes. However, this analysis of time spent on household work suggests that the attitude of both sexes are important in their own household work performance.

This research found that it was partner's social class that was associated with the time men and women spend on household work, rather than own social class and that, consequently, both partners' social class were associated with levels of sharing. It would seem that higher levels of the men's social class are associated with their partners spending less time on household work and an increasing level of sharing. This pattern is mirrored for women's social class only in respect of the professional category. These findings indicate, although somewhat tentatively, that greater levels of sharing are more likely among higher social classes. However, the relationship between social class and household work performance is likely to be highly complex and compounded by interactional effects.⁹

The nature of the kind of analysis conducted here can only highlight broad, aggregate trends. However, those identified here indicate that there may be some interesting and complex processes occurring that might be best explored by a qualitative approach.

Finally, what light do these findings shed on the reasons why women do more household work than men and why does the organisation of household work remain predominantly 'traditional'?

One reason for this is women's relationship to the labour market. When women have dependent children, they are much more likely to work part-time than men (42 per cent of employed women in the sample work twenty-five hours or fewer per week compared to only 2 per cent of employed men). Therefore, women are likely to do more household work because they are more likely to work fewer hours than their male partners.

Women's average earnings from paid employment are significantly lower than men's. The mean average monthly earnings of employed women in the sample was £784 compared to an average of £1,529 for employed men. This is partly because women spend less time in paid employment. However, it is also the case that 'women's work' is lower paid because it is done by women. Millward and Woodland (1995) found (whilst controlling for a wide range of variables that affect pay) that 'there are still large differences in pay between men and women that are accentuated by gender concentration within establishments' (Millward and Woodland 1995: 241). Women's level of earnings also significantly affect the economic power they have within the household. The mean average contribution made by employed women to household income is 25 per cent for women earning less than £450 per month, 42 per cent for women earning between £450 to £1,199 per month and 56 per cent for women earning £1,200 or more per month.

The research presented in this paper predicts that if a woman and a man have equivalent pay, social class and working hours, the woman will still do considerably more household work than the man. Women's continued responsibility for the bulk of household work has major implications for women's employment prospects and their economic welfare. Women cannot compete with men in the labour market on equal terms because while men are largely free of domestic work, women have household work to take care of as well (Lister 1993). At the same time, as this research has shown, employment among women is linked to greater egalitarian arrangements in the home (due to the effect of a woman's occupational class, her working hours and her greater economic power). Women face a double bind situation where they are disadvantaged in the labour market due to their domestic responsibilities and their disadvantaged position in employment leads to a continuation of these domestic responsibilities.

Women's disadvantaged position in the labour market is a key factor in maintaining their continued economic dependence on men (Joshi *et al.* 1995). Lister

has argued that women's economic dependence is central to maintaining their unequal social citizenship (Lister 1993). Women are at particular risk of 'hidden' poverty due to this. For instance, when income sharing does not happen between couples, in women's old age because they have not accrued good pension entitlements or upon separation or divorce, they can experience a huge drop in income because they have no (or little) financial support from a male partner. And, as this research has shown, economic power in the household is also linked to the sharing and performance of household work between partners.

Joshi *et al.* (1995) have also argued that a further factor in maintaining women's economic dependence is the benefits system. Although much overt discrimination has disappeared from these systems, they still reinforce the idea of women's economic dependence on men (Joshi *et al.* 1995:10–11). The assumption of women's economic dependence on men disadvantages *all* women in the labour market since this perpetuates women's lower pay (Lister 1993).

Of course, some women do still manage to achieve high status, well-paid positions in the labour market. However, since even these women cannot necessarily expect equal sharing of household work, this group of women may shun marriage or permanent partnerships. Women's 'dual burden' may also be linked to increasing divorce rates, delayed age of marriage, the increased proportion of babies born outside marriage and increased childlessness (Layte 1998; McRae 1989). Unfortunately, though, there has been little research carried out into the extent and nature of these links.

A radical change to the present organisation of household work will require both a change in ideology, culture and traditions at all levels in society and improvement in women's status in the labour market. It also requires the co-operation of men. A full commitment to equal opportunities from government needs to be a first step in bringing about wide spread change. Following this, equal opportunities education could be introduced through media campaigns and in schools and workplaces. Facilities also need to be in place to enable women greater access to employment (e.g. 'flexible' working practices, improved access to childcare) and also to enable men to take a greater role in the home (e.g. statutory paternity and parental leave).¹⁰ Since women's work is lower paid partly because women do it, the issue of equal pay for equal work needs to be more fully addressed and implemented.

Gender relations in the household are not going to change overnight, but without adequate facilities and persistent challenges to traditional gender roles, it could be a very long time (if ever) before an egalitarian form of household work organisation becomes the norm.

APPENDIX

Table A

Estimated means from the models

	<i>Model I</i>	<i>Model II</i>	<i>Model III</i>
	<i>Male hours per week on housework</i>	<i>Female hours per week on housework</i>	<i>Percentage of housework done by male partner</i>
RG social class (male)			
Professional	4.6	11.9	27.6
Managerial and technical	4.2	12.8	26.2
Skilled non-manual	4.3	13.3	24.4
Skilled manual	3.8	15.0	21.0
Partly skilled	4.0	16.6	20.4
Unskilled	3.3	11.1	26.4
RG social class (female)			
Professional	4.7	11.7	31.7
Managerial and technical	3.8	13.4	22.6
Skilled non-manual	4.3	12.7	25.2
Skilled manual	3.5	14.2	20.4
Partly skilled	3.7	14.0	21.4
Unskilled	4.2	14.3	24.7
Attitude: Man should be head of household (male)			
Strongly disagree	4.9	11.6	30.4
Disagree	4.2	14.2	24.1
Neither agree or disagree	4.0	13.7	23.6
Agree	4.1	15.0	21.3
Strongly agree	3.1	12.4	22.2
Attitude: Man should be head of household (female)			
Strongly disagree	4.9	11.8	30.4
Disagree	4.4	13.3	25.8
Neither agree or disagree	4.2	12.6	25.6
Agree	3.3	14.9	18.8
Strongly agree	3.4	14.3	21.1
Household type			
No children	3.7	10.4	27.0
Dependent children	4.4	15.0	23.7
Non-dependent children	4.0	15.2	22.3

The means are evaluated at covariates which appeared in the model: Male financial power=64.8, Job hours(male)=39.5, Job hours (female)=28.9, Log equivalent household income=4.31.

Table B
Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables

			Standard Deviation	Quartile Dispersion		
	Mean	Median		25%	50%	75%
Male hours per week on Housework	5	4	5	2	4	7
Female hours per week on housework	17	14	10	9	14	20
Percentage of housework done by male partner	25	22	19	11	22	38

NOTES

1. The analysis was limited to heterosexual couples.
2. This includes couples who never had children and children who are not living in the household. Using the BHPS, it is not possible to select those who have children but who are not living in the household because the survey does not track family members living outside the family.
3. This excludes all self-employed people, as job hours are not recorded for this group in the survey.
4. Individuals were asked the question ‘About how many hours do you spend on household work in an average week, such as time spent on cooking, cleaning and doing the laundry?’. Due to the way in which the data was collected on time spent on household work, there is likely to be some degree of measurement error which could not be corrected during the analysis.
5. The log scale was used in order to give satisfactory residual plots from the models.
6. The contribution of others to household work (e.g. children, other relatives, waged domestic labour) was not included as data was not available for these groups in the year examined. However, more recent waves do now collect data relating to children’s participation in household work activities.
7. The distribution of equivalised household income was very skewed and more satisfactory models were obtained by including this variable on a log scale.
8. It is not possible in this wave of the BHPS to discern if respondents are the natural parents of dependent children or not. However, as we are concerned simply with the effect of presence of children in the household it is not necessary to make this distinction.
9. From additional exploratory research that was carried out, there were indications of interactions between a number of factors in the models. However, these involved very complicated interaction terms based on very small sub-groups and these were therefore considered inappropriate for inclusion in this paper.
10. At the time of writing, the government was planning to implement legislative changes which incorporate additional maternity benefits, leave for family reasons, and parental leave, in accordance with the European Social Chapter.

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