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Review

Empowering women economically and paying unpaid house workers

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House work is a disputed area. We know that house members need to be fed, their laundry cleaned, living quarters tidied and when there are children, elderly or disabled individuals in the household, they need to be looked after and cared for. Getting the housework done usually requires cooperation and sometimes negotiation amongst members living together in order for responsibilities to be distributed fairly between two individuals who are usually the woman and the man, wife and husband, mother and father. However, in most cases, we find that women do more house work than men, even when both of them have jobs and contribute to the process of creating income. Although there is no objection to the fact that house work is both time consuming and laborious, women are not paid for it, and in all cultures it is regarded as a woman's natural responsibility. This article explores three important issues. First, the equal share of unpaid house work between men and women helps women gain more labor market opportunities. Secondly, the need to acknowledge women's unpaid house work in a country's GDP, and finally, paying women for house work creates an incentive for women in poor developing countries to stay at home and take care of their own families and raise their own children, instead of working as maids and nannies in rich developed countries.

Key words: Unpaid work, domestic work, the second shift, house work, child care, equal share, gender, time availability, relative resources, autonomous women.

INTRODUCTION

Women and girls spend substantially more time than men undertaking unpaid care work but their contribution is rarely acknowledged by policy makers. The impact of this unpaid work, particularly on women who live in poverty, is huge, thereby infringing on women's ability to join the labor market and improve their economic chances. Women in employment have to fit in care work into their day, leaving little to no leisure time, and sometimes shifting the responsibility for household tasks on to other female members of the family.

The issue of women's unpaid house work has had much literal attention as shown in: *The Politics of House Work* (Malos, 1980), a book republished in 1995 where Malos makes the question about domestic labor as accessible and as relevant today as it was in the 1980s and argues that women's unpaid labor fits with their oppression and marginalization worldwide. However, this book does not touch on the importance of including women's unpaid house work in GDP. The land mark study undertaken by sociologist Hochschild (1990) in her book *The Second Shift* focuses on women who work inside and outside their homes and shows how they suffer from chronic exhaustion, low sex drive, and more frequent illness; the cost is health and happiness for both partners and often the survival of their marriage. The book, though relevant today, does not suggest the importance of women's unpaid work to the GDP. *The Revaluation of Women's Work* (Lewenhak, 1992) provides a survey and analysis where the narrow definition of work excludes much of women's labor in our industrialized societies. Lewenhak argues that valuing women's paid and unpaid labor is a crucial step towards narrowing the gender gap. Marcal (2015) gives us a new and fresh take on women's unpaid care work in her book *Who Cooked Adam Smith's Dinner: A Story About Women and Economics*. Although Marcal's book does

not only focus on women's unpaid work but also on social differences between gender in general, she coins the term *Homo Economicus*, or the economic man who is the sole generator of GDP and argues that although Adam Smith's mother would have cooked his dinner seeing that he never married and lived most of his life with her, she does not figure in his account of how meals are produced: "it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker that we can expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest".

It is important - before delving into the three issues this paper explores - to understand what unpaid work is, the theories around why women do more unpaid house work than men, and the studies conducted on the macro and micro level in different countries on unpaid house work.

WHAT IS UNPAID WORK?

People allocate their time to activities that can be classified as paid work, unpaid work and no work. Leaving aside sleep time, the concept of "no work" is time spent on personal care and leisure. Paid work refers to time contracted out and remunerated. Unpaid work includes all work activities and services not rewarded or remunerated (Antonopoulos, 2008). Unpaid work differs in quantity and quality from one society to another; in some societies, women carry out unpaid work of caring for children, the elderly and the disabled members of their families, cook, clean, iron, tidy up the house, help with school homework and projects, drive children and other members of the family to school, practice, the hospital or work, take care of pets, maintain the garden and buy groceries. In other poorer, underdeveloped societies, women tend to do the above, including pumping or carrying heavy buckets of water from wells or rivers, chop and carry heavy fire wood, make or sew clothing for their family, etc. Women carrying out unpaid work also differ in terms of age, level of education, wealth and status; in underdeveloped and developing countries, we see young girls carrying out unpaid work in the home in addition to fetching clean water and fire wood. However, in developed societies, young children do not carry any work responsibility. Despite all social differences around the world regarding unpaid work, one thing remains constant, in all societies, men and women carry out the burden of unpaid work disproportionately, that is, women do more unpaid work than men.

WHY WOMEN DO MORE UNPAID WORK THAN MEN?

It is largely undisputed that women do more household work than men, but explanations for this phenomenon diverge. There are three theoretical perspectives on the process of domestic labor allocation dominating literature: (1) time availability, (2) relative resources, and (3) the gender perspective (Marini and Shelton, 1993).

Time availability suggests that dividing house work depends largely on the spouse's availability at home, hence, how much time men and women spend doing unpaid work in the house is related to how much of their time is spent in paid market labor, with women's time more affected by this perspective (Coverman, 1985).

The relative resources can be expressed in two ways: the first argues that the allocation of housework reflects power relations between men and women, that is, the resources each partner brings to the home determines how much domestic labor is completed by the partners. A variant on this theme is that women are primarily responsible for house work because they are - in many cases - economically dependent on their husbands and hence cannot successfully bargain out of doing domestic work (Brines, 1994). The second argument can be drawn on the microeconomic theory in which domestic labor is divided in ways to maximize efficiency through the specialization of partners; partners specialize in market and non-market skills, and since women have an advantage in domestic labor owing largely to their roles as mothers, this results in their concentration on unpaid non-market work (Blair and Lichter, 1991).

Finally, the gender theory argues that housework is a symbolic enactment of gender relations and explains why there is not a simple trade-off between time spent in unpaid and paid labor among men and women in marital relationships, with its focus on ideational and interactional expressions of gender. This perspective emphasizes that housework does not have a neutral meaning but rather its performance by women and men helps define and express gender relations within households. The roles of wife and mother are intimately tied to expectations for doing housework and displayed through outcomes such as a clean house (Robinson and Milkie, 1998).

The time availability theory and the relative resources theory can both be criticized for neglecting important issues, such as the non-economic benefits of marriage associated with companionship and affection (Blau et al., 2001), thus arguing that division of house work depends on the bargaining power of each spouse which in turn depends on the spouse's market earning power not applicable. This is proven even further when it is taken into consideration that women's financial dependency on their male partners does not necessarily remain the same. Plus when we say women do more house work due to women's role as mothers, we are ignoring the preference theory (Hakim, 2000) which provides that there are three preference groups of women: home-centered, adaptive women, and work-centered women.

Other sociological approaches reject the idea of gender role division upon which women do more unpaid house labor and men do more market paid labor. This gender division theory rests on the idea that men and women have different gender identities, and they want to be recognized as a "competent member of a sex category with the capacity and desire to perform appropriate gender behaviors". This is known by sociologists as

"gender doing" where individual behavior is affected by expectations held by others. Individuals "do" and produce gender in everyday activities; wives perform unpaid-housework in order to enact their femininity symbolically, while husbands avoid it for symbolic masculinity reasons. Creating behavioral norm according to Brines (1994), the more a husband relies on his wife for economic support, the less house work he does, in order to compensate symbolically for this non-traditional economic relation. This behavior contradicts that of which the bargaining theory predicts, where the more income a wife brings, the less unpaid house work she performs (Bittman et al., 2003).

STUDIES ON HOUSE WORK AT MICRO LEVEL

Although much research has been carried out about unpaid-house work division on the macro level, not many studies have been carried out on the issue at the micro level. The most prominent study by Breen and Cooke (2005) develops a game theoretical approach to family bargaining, in which the division of domestic work depends on gender ideology and women's economic capacity to threaten with exiting the marriage or relationship. They found that only *Autonomous* women, that is, women with strong preferences for autonomy can negotiate a more equal division of the domestic work with their partners, because they can more credibly threaten them with exit from the marriage. While on the men's side, only *Cooperators* and *Adjusters* will contribute to domestic tasks.

Batalova and Cohen (2003) analyzed the division of domestic labor in 22 countries, finding that several micro-level factors are associated with higher men's cooperation in domestic work, such as: having a non-traditional gender ideology, being younger than 47, having higher education, wives earning more money than their husbands, husbands not working full time and having cohabitated before marriage also has a positive effect on cooperation across all countries, although its intensity varies by country.

Fuwa (2004) shows that political and economic gender inequalities limit the effect of individual level variables such as relative resources, time availability and gender ideology. On the division of household labor in 22 countries, women's employment situation and gender ideology have stronger equalizing effects on the gender division of household labor in countries where there is less gender inequality in the labor market and political spheres. In another study (Fuwa and Cohen, 2007) performed in 33 countries, the authors found, amongst other things, that housework is more equally shared between the genders in countries with an absence of discrimination against women in access to employment and with entitlement to long parental leave, but the same cannot be said for public childcare and the presence of affirmative action.

Crompton (2006) also takes an institutional perspective and studies six countries. She finds the most egalitarian division of housework in the United States, Norway, Great Britain, and Finland, and the least egalitarian in France, and Portugal. In the Scandinavian countries, governments have promoted policies that encourage men to share more domestic work[1], while in Portugal such policies have been non-existent. In the case of France, social policies in the last decade have emphasized the objective of attaining gender equality, and there is generous supply of child-care services, but this does not seem to have led to more equal housework sharing.

EQUAL SHARE OF UNPAID HOUSE WORK BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN HELPS WOMEN GAIN EQUAL PAID MARKET LABOR OPPORTUNITIES

Women face such difficulties in paid employment because they shoulder the brunt of essential with yet unpaid work in the context of the family (such as caring for children or adults and housework). According to a report released in 2013 and based on 2010 data, women still spend 26 hours a week in unpaid work, against 9 hours for men.One basis of gender equality is equal access of women and men to economic empowerment, however, if women and men both work, then chores and parental tasks should fall on both genders to the same extent. This is precisely the reason why increasing men's share of caregiving and domestic work is one main strategy for extending women's professional participation.

This relates to key issues in Europe 2020 strategy and council conclusions on the European Pact for Gender Equality for the period of 2011-2020. The role of men in a more gender equal society, focusing on men's share of caring, is important for the majority of these issues, with better employment and social inclusion among the main goals:

1. Employment - better participation of men in family life increases women's opportunities for paid labor market participation.
2. Social inclusion - increasing men's share of care-giving and domestic work fosters men's inclusion in family life as well as women's inclusion in professional life (The European Commission, 2013).

Analysis of studies conducted by the European Commission show that men's proportion of unpaid work has grown. However, time spent on domestic tasks and care activities remains gender-divided and varies significantly between European countries. The variation can be explained by many factors, including labor market conditions, politics, gender arrangements, family variations and paternity leave systems. Increasing men's

[1] See pp. 13-15 of this paper for an assessment of the Scandinavian approach to encourage men to perform more childcare and house work.

share of caring and domestic activities means increasing women's participation in the workplace, and no country can afford to compromise its competitive potential by neglecting one half of its society (The European Commission, 2014).

Studies have also shown that when men are more involved in child care and house work, this improves contact with children, in addition to more satisfaction in life and in relationships. Other benefits include better quality of life, health, and healthier marriages with less probability of conflict and violence (The European Commission, 2014).

In a study conducted by Cancian et al. (1993), of the changes in family income of married couples in the U.S., they found that increases in women's employment and earnings lowered market earning inequality overall, with considerable variation among racial/ethnic groups, showing that greater women employment reduced overall inequality in women's earnings. Similarly, Cancian and Shoeni (1992) examined differences in married couples' income across 11 countries and found that wives' earnings reduced overall income inequality, resulting in what has been described by some scholars as the equalizing effect. It has also been found (Freeman and Schettkatt, 2002) that the valuing unpaid house work show an increase in the family's market earnings, and time devoted to unpaid non-market work does not decline proportionally with time devoted to market employment (Folbre and Yoon, 2008).

Folbre et al. (2009) provide in their research that every study they reviewed for the purpose of their research showed that unpaid non-market work has an equalizing effect on women's total hours of market work, as women with no paid work hours work just as long - overall - as those who combine paid and unpaid work. Further, those who work part-time for pay typically put in more hours of unpaid work than those who work full-time, and they also put as many or more hours of total work than those who are unemployed. This pattern helps explain the potentially significant equalizing effect of any positive valuation of women's unpaid work on the level of extended earnings.

Unpaid house work performed by women needs to be included in countries' GDP as paid market labor

The social and economic value of care work

Because the issue of unpaid housework was masked and marginalized by women's rush into market work in the 1960s, there are essentially two meanings of care that have emerged; one having to do with the social value of care, and one having to do with the ethic of care, and both these meanings contribute to the meaning of unpaid care work (Gerstel and Gross, 1987). It was Folbre (2001) who first argued that caring for dependent others has a significant social value, and is not just a matter of private lives. She argues that the care and raising of children benefits society as a whole, above and beyond its benefits to parents, in many ways, children are the workers and taxpayers of the next generation, thus parenting according to this perspective is not solely a personal choice but also a commitment that carries important social ramifications and is a social contribution. In recent years, Folbre (2006) has extended her argument to include not only the care of children but also the sick, disabled and the elderly, pointing out the such caring activities benefit the public good.

Folbre's (2001) central thesis is that the invisible hand of the market cannot function without the invisible heart of care work; the meaning of care work is clearly articulated in the conceptualization of a mutually independent relationship between economic production and social reproduction (Razavi, 2007). Economic production and social reproduction are each necessary for the other. Without sufficient high quality economic production, social reproduction will be impaired. Folbre's main contribution to the idea of social value of unpaid care work is her challenge of the false split between public and private and moving unpaid care work out of the strictly private domain, because this is necessary for unpaid care work to receive the attention of policy makers. At the same time, brining unpaid care work in the public domain as work that has significant social value requires attention to the interrelationship of paid and unpaid care work.

There is also the ethical meaning of care work, where Daly (2002) has argued that an ethic of care counters the individualized person making moral decision based on abstract principles of right and wrong and a related market ethic of individual conception rooted in self-interest. Human beings exist in relational webs of interconnectedness rather than a model of individualized and autonomous adults who have grown out of dependency, thus, as humans we are all interdependent, we all need care more or less throughout our lives, as dependency is a condition of our lives. Therefore, care is not only for the dependent other but also for the self, for relationships, for communities, and organizations and for the physical world (Patton, 2013).

Why unpaid care work should be measured in countries' GDP?

Unpaid domestic work gives our economy a huge boost. It can be hard to make the impact concrete, however, as currently measured, GDP does not take this work into account but it should. A study (Bridgman et al., 2012) attempts to measure the economic value of household production, or work done in the home that includes childcare, cooking, ironing, shopping, housework, odd jobs, and gardening. It may come as little surprise after reading the list of tasks that women spend far more hours a week on this kind of labor. How do you figure out the value of those hours spent in the home, where no one

ever earns wages for wiping noses or countertops? The study calculates what it would cost to pay a domestic worker to do the work. The value for individual families is big: it increases personal income by 30%. But the effect on the economy is also huge. If this work were incorporated when measuring GDP, it would have raised it by 26% in 2010. Also adding home production when measuring the economy reduces income inequality, although households engage in a similar number of hours in home production regardless of income. And most importantly adding value to home production raises the income of low-income households more than that of high-income households.

The economy needs women to leave some of the unpaid house work in favor of paid market labor; without the women work force, the economy would be smaller by a quarter (Covert, 2012).

In a study undertaken by Francavilla et al. (2011) to measure the GDP value of unpaid care work performed by women in Italy and Poland, they found out that the total yearly value of unpaid family care work equals to 8.29 and 67.06 billion Euros, which corresponds to 4.3% and 4.5% of GDP in Poland and Italy respectively.

In 2006, The Economist published that in developed economies, women produce just under 40% of official GDP. But if the worth of housework is added (valuing the hours worked at the average wage rates of a home help or a nanny) then women probably produce slightly more than half of total output (The Economist, 2006).

Can government policies ease the burden of unpaid house work for women?

When women work long hours in paid market labor they come home to a second shift of hard work of unpaid house-work, creating a distorted relationship between work and home. Hochschild and Ehrenreich (2003) provide that by involving fathers or male spouses - if there is one - in house work and turning un-paid house work to paid work we can achieve very important results for women, such as unburdening women of the second shift, creating more harmonious heterosexual relationships and thus get grips with high rates of divorce, and lastly to give women in poorer third world countries an opportunity to care for their own children instead of working as nannies in richer developed countries. Hochschild also points out the similarities between hard working men and women, where women have started to resemble men in the way they now work outside the home as well and, moreover, under “male” conditions: overloaded working weeks and hardly any time for home. Women are also experiencing similar shifts in the values they are ascribed to at home and work, whereas men had already said they felt more at home at work than around the house, many women have recently started to express the same view as they feel more overloaded with house work and feel they are treated unfairly at home, therefore escaping to work (Hochschild and Machung, 2003).

Because work has taken over the lives of women, family time suffers due to the long hours women spend at work, and with men not carrying their fair share of child care and house chores many American sociologists such as Hochschild, Gornick, Meyers, Jacobs and Gerson look longingly to Western Europe for solutions, where many European countries have adopted policies, such as shorter work weeks for women, widely available child care as a part of the welfare system these countries offer citizens, and a generous maternal and paternal leave policies (Gerson, 2004).

In the Netherlands so many men and women have part-time jobs, so that both parents can manage paid market labor and unpaid domestic labor together. In Norway, there is a highly developed welfare system where employed men are eligible for a year’s paternity leave at 90% pay, where 80% of Norwegian men now take over a month of paternal leave (Hochschild and Ehrenreich, 2003).

Duyvendak and Stavenuiter (2010) observe that although in the Netherlands far more women work part-time jobs than women in America, 73% of Dutch women work part-time while only 18% of American women work part-time, allowing Dutch women to spend more time at home and performing child care, while 80% of Dutch men work full-time and 20% of them work part-time. The joined paid market labor a Dutch couple would perform per week is 61 hours, while the joined paid market labor an American couple would work is 80 hours per week. According to these percentages one would imagine, there exists a higher balance between paid and unpaid work in the Netherlands, however, the reality is that in the Netherlands where both men and women believe a woman must give priority for care and house work upon paid market labor, there are less chances for women to achieve economic independency and less chances for women to be appointed in highly qualified jobs, creating a career penalty for women (Duyvendak and Stavenuiter, 2010). Also, it is shown that although in the Netherlands most women work part-time and a lot of men work less hours than American men, there is no evidence that Dutch men pitch in more hours for the house chores or child care, in fact, women in the Netherlands spend much more time doing house work and caring for children and other family members than their men do. Women spend up to 23 hours per week on unpaid house work and care, while men spend an average of 9 hours per week, such hours are spent less in doing house chores, cooking or caring for children and more to do with car/garden maintenance and grocery shopping (Misra et al., 2006).

The generous leave scheme incorporated in the welfare system of Sweden and Denmark, where men are entitled to a year paternity leave, could be viewed as a solution as men are encouraged to spend more time at home to do their part of child care. However, statistics show that Scandinavian men put their paid market labor just as

much at the center of their lives as other European and American men do, there is no sign of a fundamental shift in gender attitudes in Scandinavian countries (Ellingsaeter and Leira, 2001).

Paid house work creates an incentive for women in poor undeveloped countries

Adam Smith's take on housework is as follows: "menial tasks and services… generally perish in the instant of their performance and seldom leave any trace or value behind them…(Smith, 1776)". Smith's perspective was, how can you respect work that, once it's done, instantly needs doing again? This is true the main reason why house work is so tedious and the main reason why upper class and middle class women would rather leave their house work to be done by maids and nannies from the working class is that house work is never finished. The minute you finish cleaning the kitchen, you'll need to re-clean it again because you've cooked dinner or one of the children made themselves a sandwich. No longer have you wore an outfit for the day will you need to wash, dry and iron it again, and it's all so time consuming; the same goes for cleaning and tidying offices and work places. However, the over whelming down side to having a maid or a nanny - besides the feeling of guilt and shame when delegating the duty of caring for one's children and one's homes to someone else - is the morality of the appalling conditions under which these migrant maids and nannies work; they have no job security, they are outside minimum-wage legislation (even when there is legislation, it is usually ignored), they have no paid holidays or paid sick leaves (Williams, 2012). These migrant women from poorer countries have two choices; either stay in their home countries and take care of their children while living in miserable poverty, or leave their children, homes and families to come to richer countries and take care of other people's children and homes. Although these migrant women take care of our children and homes, we treat them degradingly and continue to take advantage of their low wages. Hochschild (2000) and Hooks (1984) point out that career women tend to pay working class women to do the second shift work in the home so they can avoid that extra work, and they have an interest in keeping the wages of nannies and maids as low as possible to keep their own wages surplus for themselves. Thus, if anyone is standing in the way of working class women to live better lives, it is women from middle and upper class backgrounds.

These working class women are often encouraged by their poor developing governments to migrate in search of domestic work reasoning this to the fact that women are more likely than their male counterparts to send their hard earned wages to their families rather than spending the money on their selves. In general, women send between half and nearly all of what they earn (Hochschild and Ehrenreich, 2003). Unfortunately, it is not unusual for these migrant women doing house work for very poor wages to send back to their families, to go back home after years of hard work and find their unemployed husbands have squandered their remittances away on alcohol and gambling (Brochmann, 1993).

By enforcing policies that can help to first divide the house work burden on both spouses, and secondly, by paying women - especially single mothers who do not have a male partner to share the work load - for domestic work. We are not only creating a balance and a sense of quality in the home between partners but creating an incentive for these migrant women in poor backgrounds to stay in their home countries with their families and to take care of their own children instead of leaving their homes and children behind to come and clean our homes and raise our children.

The philosophical problem that arises here, however, is how domestic work can be measured and thus remunerated? How can you distinguish work from play? Sometimes the mother is bathing or feeding the child and sometimes she is only playing with the child. Does playing with your child constitutes the meaning of work, that is, effort that requires payment? Also what about trivial house tasks such as dusting and such? Many sociologists (Barrett, 1980) argue that as far as childcare is concerned whether it is feeding, bathing, teaching or playing, it is all valuable and is all a part of the child's upbringing. In terms of house cleaning as it is the case with cleaning offices, all activities should be taken into account, no matter how trivial, as the cleaner will dust as well as scrub floors, mop, etc. No job is too small or too trivial and thus all matters of domestic work should be taken into account. According to this, women doing their own domestic work should be paid by the hour the same amount they would have paid if they had a nanny or maid; the same should be applied to nannies and maids if they quit domestic work and go back to take care of their own families and homes, to be paid the average wage of domestic help.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Although some government policies might theoretically seem useful in encouraging men to share the load of unpaid house work, there are still arguments that can be made against them. Some men might use such policies for personal interest, for example, taking a fully paid parental leave for personal leisure or travel. The same can be said for governments offering men part-time jobs. We might also argue that such policies of generous paid paternal leave, or men occupying part-time jobs are useless to the growing number of single mothers.

A widely available, accessible and free child care service can help women immensely in their pursue of paid market labor, especially when nurseries are allocated at work institutions where mothers actually work

as part of the welfare program provided by the State to ensure a smaller gap between men and women in their access to paid market labor.

Another recommendation is to pay women for house work, the amount can be calculated in comparison to what women would normally pay a nanny or a maid to look after their children or clean and cook if they were to hire one. By doing this women can feel less discriminated against in terms of bearing the house work burden simply because they get paid for it which can also help boost their performance in their paid market job as they will feel more appreciated for all the effort they make at home as well as their market job.

When we pay women for house work and child care and poorer underdeveloped countries conform to this example, we can ensure more women in poorer countries will have an incentive to stay home and care for their children, elderly and sick members of their family instead of leaving their families to come take care of ours in their desperate need to financially support their families.

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