

Gendered Housework among Adolescents: The Influence of Parents' Gender Ideologies

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Abstract: Although an in-depth literature explores the gendered lives of young children in India, little is known about adolescents. I utilize 24-hour time diary data from 717 adolescents to examine how boys' and girls' housework varies by parental gender ideologies. I find that girls do much more housework than boys, which is expected in the highly gender-stratified Indian context. More importantly, I find that adolescent girls with egalitarian parents do significantly less housework than girls with less egalitarian parents. At first glance, these findings support socialization theory – that what parents think translates into what adolescents do. However, I find that boys do very little housework, regardless of parental gender attitudes. I conclude that socialization theory is not gender neutral; egalitarian parents appear to promote gender equity by reducing their daughters' time in housework while not increasing their sons'. This finding suggests a “stalled gender revolution” among youth in India.

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Introduction and Background

Despite gains in employment, women continue to do most of the housework globally (Luke et al. 2014, Cunningham 2001, Evertsson 2014). Although this gender gap is usually examined among adults, its origins have been traced back to differential socialization and gendered patterns during childhood and adolescence (Cunningham 2001, Lundberg 2005). For this reason, the division of housework among boys and girls in adolescence, many have argued, represents the reproduction of gender inequalities (Cunningham 2001, Crouter et al. 2001, Gager et al. 2009, Evertsson 2006, Lin and Adserà 2013, Manke et al. 1994).

Like married women, adolescent girls tend to do much more housework than boys globally. Although girls generally tend to do more housework across contexts, substantial variation exists across individuals and households. There are several theoretical explanations of why this may be.

First, social learning theory (Bandura and Walters 1963) posits that children and adolescents learn from observing and modeling their parents' behavior. According to this perspective, adolescents observe the division of labor modeled by their parents, internalize which tasks are to be performed by their gender, and follow suit. Therefore, fathers increased time in housework should be associated with increased time in housework for sons. Similarly, mothers who spend less time in housework or who work in the labor force model a more egalitarian family context for their children, resulting in decreased time in housework for girls. Evidence supports this theory. In China, Sweden, and the United States, sons' time spent in housework, but not daughters', is positively associated with fathers' time spent in housework (Hu 2015, Evertsson 2006, Gager et al. 2009).

However, how this relationship relates to the type of household task remains untested. Past research has shown that out-door chores, such as home and yard maintenance, are more often performed by men and boys while in-door chores, such as cooking and cleaning, are performed by women and girls (Blair 1992, Raley and Bianchi 2006, Gager et al. 2009). Social learning theory predicts that it is not just total time in housework that adolescents learn from their parents' behaviors, but what types of housework are most appropriate for a particular gender. Therefore, sons with fathers who perform more feminine-typed housework (i.e., indoor chores) will perform more feminine-typed housework. The same will be true for daughters with mothers who more so perform these tasks.

Second, according to socialization theory, adolescents learn not only from what parents *do* but what parents *think*. This suggests that parents' gender ideologies – individual beliefs about appropriate gender roles and responsibilities – are expected to significantly influence their adolescents' behaviors (Davis and Greenstein 2009). Therefore, girls with egalitarian fathers and mothers will do less housework than girls with less egalitarian parents while boys with egalitarian mothers and fathers will do more than boys with less egalitarian parents. Empirical evidence supports this. Blair (1992) found that adolescent girls whose mothers hold egalitarian gender ideologies do less housework than their peers in the United States, while boys with egalitarian fathers do more. Similarly, Lin and Adserà (2013) found that the gender equality in adolescent housework is greater among adolescents whose mothers hold more egalitarian gender ideologies in India. Here, the authors used proxy measures for mothers' ideologies, including stated son preference and media exposure.

Like social learning theory, socialization theory posits that the type of housework task is important. According to this theory, adolescents with egalitarian parents would participate in sex-typed housework less and opposite-sex-typed tasks more. So, for example, girls of egalitarian mothers and fathers would perform in-door chores less often than girls with non-egalitarian mothers and fathers. Past research finds support for this. Blair (1992) found that boys (ages 5-18) in the United States, perform more feminine-typed housework tasks when their fathers are more egalitarian, while girls with more egalitarian mothers perform these tasks less often.

Third, time availability or substitution theory posits that adolescents' time in housework will increase if parents, or other family members, are not available to fulfill this responsibility. Because most housework is performed by mothers, mothers have received most of the attention in regards to this theory. Therefore, time constraints, such as maternal employment, would result in adolescents completing a greater share of the housework. In support of this perspective, a study in Sweden found that adolescents, both boys and girls, spend more time in housework when their fathers spend more time in housework, presumably because all family members are substituting for their mothers/partners (Evertsson 2006). Other work, however, shows that substitution is a gendered process with mothers often relying more heavily on daughters. Supporting this, studies in the United States (Crouter et al. 2001, Gager et al. 2009) and China (Hu 2015) found that maternal employment and education are associated with increased time in girls', but not boys', housework (Crouter et al. 2001, Gager et al. 2009). Employment represents one constraint mothers may face that increases adolescents' time in housework; however, there are several others. For example, the number of children in a household and the ages of these children, with younger children representing greater constraint, can impact mothers' time. Further, studies of time availability need to account for the presence of other family members, like siblings or grandparents, who may take on some of this responsibility instead of adolescents.

Fourth, it may be that adolescents' time spent in housework is also shaped by their own characteristics, not just by their parents'. For example, adolescents who want to go to college spend much more time studying and in school-related activities (Shanahan and Flaherty 2001). This signals that adolescents have some influence in how they spend their time; it is not fully delineated by parents. Therefore, adolescents' own gender ideologies could shape adolescents' goals and therefore how they spend their time, net of their parents' ideologies. One study in the United States measured adults' (age 31) gender ideologies and observed their influence, net of their parents' ideologies, on their division of housework. This study found that adult daughters' and sons' egalitarian gender ideologies were significantly related to their more gender-equal division of labor, net of their mothers' gender ideologies. In fact, for daughters, but not sons, mothers' gender ideologies were no longer significant when included along with daughters' own gender ideologies (Cunningham 2001). No study that I am aware of has observed this relationship in adolescence.

Current study

The main contribution of this work is to expand established family theories by adding a much-needed gender component. In this study, I examine adolescent girls' and boys' time spent in housework in South India and how it varies by parents' behaviors (paid and unpaid labor) and adolescents' and parents' gender ideologies. I seek to test the above theories, whose expected associations are summarized in Table 1.

Much of India, both rural and urban, is highly stratified by gender (Luke et al. 2014). Men are usually seen as the main decision-makers in the family while women are held responsible for the domestic sphere (Saraff and Srivastava 2010). Consequently, men do not participate in housework and childcare to the same extent as women (Luke et al. 2014). Therefore, understanding this relationship at an earlier stage, adolescence, could provide further insight into the origins of this inequality. A further contribution of my study is the inclusion of detailed measures of gender ideologies of parents and adolescents, unlike other work that relied on proxies such as media exposure (i.e., Lin and Adserà 2013). Because adolescent time spent in housework has been globally recognized as a gender issue (Lin and Adserà 2013, Hu 2015, Cunningham 2001, Crouter et al. 2001, Gager et al. 2009, Evertsson 2006, Manke et al. 1994), examining the role of gender attitudes provides a compelling new perspective. Further, unlike most past research studying adolescent housework (i.e., Lin and Adserà 2013, Crouter et al. 2001, Gager et al. 2009, Evertsson 2006, Blair 1992, Hu 2015), this study utilizes time diary data, as opposed to self- or parent-reported estimates of the number of hours an adolescent spends in housework. Time diaries have been found more accurate than these estimates (Ben-Arieh and Ofir 2002). Finally, I include measures of mothers', fathers', and adolescents' characteristics to observe their independent influence on girls' and boys' time spent in housework.

Research Questions

My study will answer the following questions:

- 1) How much time do adolescent girls and boys spend in housework and in which tasks?
- 2) Are mothers' characteristics (employment, education, and time spent in housework) and gender ideologies related to the amount of time boys and girls spend in housework?
- 3) Are fathers' characteristics (employment, education and time spent in housework) and gender ideologies related to the amount of time boys and girls spend in housework?
- 4) Are adolescents' own gender ideologies related to the amount of time girls and boys spend in housework?

Data and Methods

I use rich new data from the South India Community Health Survey (SICHS) to investigate the questions posed in this paper. SICHS is a data collection effort in 400 villages in rural Vellore District, Tamil Nadu. The household survey sample targeted 5,000 ever-married men between the ages of 25 and 60, and interviews and assessments were undertaken with men, their wives, and their children ages 0-17. The survey was completed in October 2016. For my preliminary results, I include all adolescents (ages 12-17) who co-reside with their fathers and mothers. Adolescents were included only if they had completed a time diary and also had a mother and father who completed questionnaires (n= 717).

Dependent Variables

Adolescents filled out a time diary indicating each activity, hour-by-hour, in which they participated during the preceding 24 hours. This method provides more detailed and accurate time use information than global questions that ask respondents to report estimates of the amount of time spent in housework or by relying on parents' reports. An extensive review found that children are reliable reporters of their own time and that researchers should use child reports

whenever possible (Ben-Arieh and Ofir 2002). My dependent variable is the total number of minutes adolescent girls and boys spent in housework during that 24-hour period. Housework included both indoor and outdoor house maintenance such as preparing food, sweeping/cleaning, washing clothes, water/wood collection, vehicle repair, and garden/tree maintenance. In future drafts, I will experiment by measuring sex-typed housework (i.e., indoor vs. outdoor) and by measuring specific household tasks separately.

Independent Variables

Parental characteristics

I first include measures of *fathers' and mothers' gender ideologies*. Gender ideologies are measured with a dichotomized index. I use a question regarding freedom of action (“Girls should be able to do the same things as boys”), gender roles (“Fathers should work outside the home. Mothers should not work but care for the home and family”), and two questions on household regulations, including a statement about curfew (“Young women should be allowed to stay out late just as young men are”) and pocket money (“Parents should give the same amount of pocket money to their daughters as they give to their sons”). Responses to these questions used a 5-point Likert scale, indicating whether respondents strongly disagreed (1), disagreed (2), neither disagreed nor agreed (3), agreed (4), or strongly agreed (5) with each gender attitude statement. Items were coded or recoded so that higher values indicated more egalitarian attitudes. Responses were averaged across the four items and then the scale was dichotomized with values of 2.5 or greater coded as 1 (egalitarian) and values of 2.4 or lower coded as 0. I choose to dichotomize gender ideologies for ease of interpretation. This is one possible construction of gender ideologies. In future drafts of this paper, I will experiment with several constructions of gender ideologies based on additional survey questions and clustering techniques, such as factor and latent class analysis.

Next, I account for *mothers' and fathers' education*. I measure whether each parent had completed standard eight or higher (coded as 1) or standard seven or lower (coded as 0). Finishing standard eight indicates the completion of lower-level secondary school. In future drafts, I will include a measure of years of education rather than a categorical variable. I include measures of *mothers' and fathers' employment*, measured by categorical variables indicating employment in non-agricultural work (coded as 1), employment in agricultural work (coded as 2), and unemployment (coded as 3). I do this to account for the different implications of mothers who work in agriculture, which is more common historically, and those who work outside of agriculture, which could be perceived as more gender egalitarian.

Adolescent Characteristics

The key independent variable is *adolescent gender* (1=female, 0=male). I further include measures of *adolescent age*, kept as a continuous variable, and *gender ideologies*. Adolescent gender ideologies were measured to match mothers' and fathers' gender ideologies as closely as possible. Adolescents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with several statements using a ten-point Likert-scale. I utilized questions very similar to those listed above under mothers' and fathers' gender ideologies. Items were coded or recoded so that higher values were more egalitarian. Responses were averaged across the four items and then the scale was dichotomized with values of 6 or greater coded as 1 (egalitarian) and values of 5 or lower coded

as 0. I also include a dichotomous variable indicating whether an adolescent reported on a *weekday* (Monday-Saturday), coded as 1, or a weekend (Sunday), coded as 0.

Further, following past research which finds that older sisters, or only girls, report doing more housework than younger sisters, or girls with sisters (Crouter et al. 2001), I include a continuous measure for *birth order* and a categorical measure for the *sex composition of siblings* (1= all sisters, 2= all brothers, 3=both brothers and sisters, 4=no siblings). Finally, I include a dichotomous variable indicating whether the parent reported on a *weekday* (Monday-Saturday), coded as 1, or a weekend (Sunday), coded as 0.

Analytic Strategy

Because the dependent variable, the number of minutes adolescents spent in housework, is continuous, I estimated several ordinary least squares regressions using parental and adolescent characteristics as independent variables. I estimated separate models for adolescent boys and adolescent girls. All models are clustered on household to account for any dependence between adolescents in the same household using the robust cluster command in Stata 14 and robust standard errors are reported. In future drafts of this paper, I will also estimate tobit regressions because a proportion of the adolescent girl (28 percent) and boy (79 percent) samples reported no time in housework. In future drafts, I will also estimate logistic regressions with a dichotomous dependent variable (1=any time in housework, 0=no time in housework) due to so few boys participating in housework at all.

Preliminary Results

An overview of descriptive statistics can be found in Table 2. Girls spend about four times more time in housework than boys. Girls are also more likely to hold egalitarian gender attitudes than boys (29 percent of girls vs. 12 percent of boys).

With respect to parental attitudes and characteristics, about one-third of both mothers and fathers have an education of Standard eight or higher. Forty-three percent of mothers are not working, 32 percent are working in non-agricultural jobs, and 26 percent work in agricultural jobs. Fathers, on the other hand, are mostly employed in agricultural work (62 percent of fathers). As expected, and mirroring the results from adolescents, more mothers are egalitarian than fathers. Interestingly, both male and female adolescents are more egalitarian than their same-sex parent.

Table 3 displays models of minutes adolescents spent in housework separately for girls and boys. Mothers' education and fathers' egalitarian gender ideologies are negatively and significantly associated with the time adolescent girls spend in housework, supporting the socialization theory that what parents think modifies adolescent behavior. Few significant associations emerged for adolescent boys. Boys' gender ideologies are marginally associated with the time adolescent boys spend in housework but in the opposite direction from what would be expected. Egalitarian boys spend less time in housework than their peers.

Future Directions

I aim to expand my analyses in several ways. First, I will estimate several measures of housework. For example, I will estimate models using time spent in female-typed housework, such as in-door chores, as the dependent variable, rather than all of housework. Further, I will estimate models separately for different type of household tasks individually. I will also estimate

the relative (to each other) time fathers and mothers spend in housework, as opposed to absolute measures of their time in housework. Last, I will estimate logistic regressions with housework coded as a dichotomous variable (1=any time spent in housework, 0=no time spent in housework). Second, to ensure accuracy, I will estimate different measures of gender ideologies. Third, I will more fully account for each family members' time use. SICHS includes time use reported by mothers, fathers, and adolescents, and I will use this information to account for time spent in other activities like paid work, education, leisure, etc. as well as estimate the division of housework among mothers and fathers. Fourth, I will include additional controls for the time constraints parents may face and the support they may receive from family members other than the adolescents. This includes controls for number of children as well as age of the youngest child. It further includes accounting for the presence and proximity of other adult relatives. Fifth, I will employ multiple imputation to avoid listwise deletion.

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Tables

Table 1. Expected associations between parent and adolescent characteristics and time spent in housework								
	Mothers' housework	Fathers' housework	Mothers' employment	Mothers' education	Fathers' education	Mother egalitarian	Father egalitarian	Adolescent egalitarian
SONS								
Social learning		+						
Socialization		+		+	+	+	+	
Time availability	--	+						
Adolescent agency								+
DAUGHTERS								
Social learning	+		--					
Socialization	+		--	--	--	--	--	
Time availability	--	+	+	+				
Adolescent agency								--

Table 2. Preliminary descriptive statistics (means and percentages) for adolescents, by gender, Tamil Nadu, India 2015-2016

	All Adolescents	Boys	Girls	Significantly different
<i>Adolescent characteristics</i>				
Number of minutes in housework daily (mean)	44.01	17.18	69.56	***
Female	51.22	--	--	
Egalitarian	20.70	11.58	29.36	***
Age (mean)	14.58	14.50	14.53	
Birth order (mean)	1.89	1.82	1.97	*
Sex composition of siblings				
All sisters	25.56	30.55	20.92	**
All brothers	40.23	36.80	43.49	*
Brothers and sisters	28.29	25.82	30.64	
No siblings	5.92	6.93	4.95	
Interviewed on a weekday	24.00	23.12	24.86	
<i>Parent Characteristics</i>				
Mother's education (standard 8 or higher)	27.91	25.05	30.64	*
Father's education (standard 8 or higher)	27.63	25.63	29.54	
Mother's employment				
Not employed	43.01	43.57	42.50	
Employed (non-agriculture)	32.01	28.89	34.98	*
Employed (agriculture)	24.97	27.54	22.53	
Father's employment				
Not employed	34.99	37.50	32.48	
Employed (non-agriculture)	2.94	3.06	2.81	
Employed (agriculture)	62.07	59.44	64.71	
Mother's egalitarian	13.45	11.39	15.41	*
Father's egalitarian	8.65	8.48	8.81	

Data: South India Community Health Survey (SICHS)

N=717

Table 3. OLS regression predicting adolescent minutes in housework, Tamil Nadu, India 2015-2016

	Girls	Boys
<i>Adolescent characteristics</i>		
Adolescent Egalitarian	-7.03 (8.51)	-16.51t (9.14)
Adolescent age	-1.60 (2.42)	-1.33 (3.22)
Birth order	1.60 (6.32)	2.17 (5.00)
Sex composition of siblings		
Both brothers and sisters (reference)		
All sisters	-9.42 (12.92)	5.43 (16.01)
All brothers	7.43 (13.04)	8.17 (8.91)
No siblings	-18.01 (21.23)	24.71 (25.39)
Interviewed on Weekday	5.75 (9.63)	-9.81 (7.18)
<i>Parent Characteristics</i>		
Mother Standard 8 or Higher	-26.60** (9.32)	7.02 (12.52)
Father Standard 8 or Higher	-7.30 (9.64)	-5.85 (12.52)
Mother's Employment		
Non-agriculture (reference)		
Agriculture	-16.07 (10.69)	6.46 (12.10)
Not Employed	-16.73 (10.49)	25.98 (16.52)
Father's Employment		
Non-agriculture (reference)		
Agriculture	13.54 (15.83)	3.23 (12.60)
Not Employed	23.14 (17.68)	-14.00 (16.36)
Mother Egalitarian	-15.46 (9.54)	28.16 (36.55)
Father Egalitarian	-24.96* (9.57)	-8.50 (10.48)
N	354	363

Robust standard errors in parentheses

t p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

All models are clustered on household

Data: South India Community Health Survey (SICHS)