

## **Outsourcing and Gender Egalitarianism: Who Hires Help?**

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**Short abstract.** Gender ideology is a central piece of our understanding about the division of household labor, but we know little about how it shapes decisions about outsourcing household labor. Outsourcing plays a major role in the current organization of household labor, as many hire housecleaners and many more regularly eat out. We use unique survey data that includes measures about gender ideology, household division of labor, and outsourcing routine and care tasks. Preliminary results show that respondents with liberal gender beliefs are more likely to outsource housecleaning, food, and child care. These findings are consistent with the idea that conservative gender beliefs have a preference for home production.

## **Extended Abstract**

### **Who outsources household labor?**

Gender ideology, or beliefs about gender relations and about the nature and preferences of sexed individuals, is a central piece of our understanding about the division of household labor (Aassve, Fuochi, and Mencarini 2014; Bianchi et al. 2000; Davis and Greenstein 2009). Gender ideology is typically used to refer to support for a division of paid and unpaid labor that is based on the notion of separate spheres (Davis and Greenstein 2009). As such, gender ideology has often been used as a predictor of the division of household labor and the consequences of the division of labor. Generally speaking, individuals with conventional views about gender expect women to be responsible and do more of the household labor than men, whereas individuals with egalitarian views about gender will not tend to assign household labor responsibilities according to gender and instead take a more shared or negotiated approach (Cunningham 2005; Davis and Greenstein 2009). Gender ideology also shapes how individuals feel about the amount of household labor that they do and the amount of household labor that their partners do (Greenstein 1996, 2009; Kornrich and Eger 2016). Given the tight link between gender ideology and household labor, it is surprising that we know little about how gender ideology shapes decisions about the outsourcing of household labor.

Outsourcing has taken a major place in the organization of household labor. Few people cook all their weekly meals at home, many people hire house cleaners, many others use laundry services to clean and iron their shirts. Using data from the late 1990s, Treas and Ruijter (2008) estimate that 95% of US households outsource some portion of typically female household tasks in any given year. Kornrich and Roberts (2018) show trends in outsourcing and estimate that about 9% of households hire housekeepers and that more of the food budget is used on pre-prepared food and eating out. Outsourcing, along with declining standards of housework and time-saving

technologies like dishwashers, has meant that individuals (particularly women) spend less and less time doing household labor than in the past. A substantial chunk of household labor is “accomplished” not via individuals’ unpaid time, but via purchasing workers’ paid time.

How does gender ideology shape decisions about outsourcing household labor? Or, does gender ideology matter at all for outsourcing? One could argue that outsourcing might have become so common, routinized, and accepted that gender ideology would have little to do with it. Eating out a few meals every week, for instance, might be nearly autonomic and not interfere with individuals’ views about gender and household labor. However, some forms of outsourcing might be more at odds with gender ideology. Eating out every day of the week for all meals, for instance, might conflict with the idea that women care about household labor and are invested in making “a home.” Our intuition is that gender ideology plays a role in deciding whether and how to outsource household labor, but how exactly gender ideology increases or decreases the prevalence of outsourcing different realms of household labor is unclear. We lay out two different possibilities.

#### *The preference for homemade goods*

Traditional gender ideology has a strong preference for home production and this should deter individuals from outsourcing household labor. The idea that women are invested in household and family care might go in hand with the idea that homemade goods are of higher quality than the equivalent goods on the market. A homemade meal or a home-raised kid might be seen as superior to takeout or childcare, in part because homemade is seen as an expression of care, love, and affection. Gender ideologies that think of women as intrinsically caring and loving will place a strong pressure to maintain home production and limit the outsourcing of household labor to the bare minimum.

Egalitarian gender ideology should on average have less emphasis on home production and more leeway for outsourcing household labor. When individuals think that household labor is not assigned to gender they might adopt a managerial/problem-solving approach to dealing with household labor. They might directly discuss the pros and cons of having one or the other do housework and openly talk about their skills and preferences in doing different tasks. If outsourcing is seen as an efficient solution to the problem of having a clean household, then a housecleaner will be hired. By detaching household labor from gender, egalitarians might have more ease to outsource household labor.

*Hypothesis 1: gender traditionalists will be less likely to outsource household labor.*

#### *Adaptation to the uninvolved partner*

A different approach notes that gender ideology might place different “burdens” on women and generate different needs for outsourcing. Performing gender traditionalism might be as much about men avoiding household labor as about women doing it with their own hands (Bittman et al. 2003; Brines 1994; Greenstein 2000). If this is so, women in gender traditionalist couples might face a greater “burden” of housework because men do little and they might use outsourcing to offload some of that burden. For instance, a gender conservative woman who might have a preference for homemade goods might also feel overwhelmed with the number of things to do and errands to run, and decide that some things need to be outsourced. Gupta’s (2007) autonomy hypothesis relates to this reasoning, which posits that women use their own earnings to reduce their own time spent on housework. Qualitative studies also show that among couples with gender conservative male partners, the decision to outsource housework can operate as a safe valve that inoculate marital conflict and disputes (Hochschild 2012; Romero 2002).

By contrast, if gender egalitarians share the burden of household labor more or less equally, this should reduce the need or pressure to outsource. It might be more manageable to

accomplish all household needs – grocery shopping, children’s appointments, cleaning, etc. – when both members of the couple feel equally responsible and are equally committed.

*Hypothesis 2: gender conservatives will be more likely to outsource*

*Association with other dimensions of ideology*

Gender ideology does not operate in isolation and can be distinctively linked to other dimensions of ideology, such as environmentalism or progressivism, in ways that interfere with its association with outsourcing household labor preferences. This is true for both gender egalitarians and traditionalists.

Although egalitarian gender ideology has no gender-based preference for homemade household goods, gender egalitarians might be more likely to hold other ideological positions that could reduce their propensity to outsource certain portions of household labor, in particular environmentalism and labor progressivism. If gender egalitarians are more likely to be environmentalists with concerns about food waste and health, this could reduce their propensity to outsource the cooking portion of household labor. If gender egalitarians are more likely to be progressives concerned about labor rights, this might reduce their propensity to outsource household services in ways that support informal and precarious economic sectors. Hiring a housecleaner or a maid, for instance, can be seen to clash with certain positions of labor progressivism (Romero 2002). Conversely, gender conservatives might have fewer environmentalist or labor justice concerns, which can offer more ease in deciding to outsource these portions of household labor.

If the correlation between gender ideology and other dimensions of ideology is strong and in the direction noted above, this pattern could either work to heighten hypotheses 2 or attenuate hypothesis 1. We plan to use different measures of ideology to tease out these correlations.

## Data and Methods

We use data collected in 2014 by the survey company Yougov.com, which maintains an online panel of respondents, and respondents receive rewards or payment for participation. Our sample, which we refer to as the Marital Continuity Survey (MCS) consisted of 1,600 respondents. 57 individuals were excluded because they were in same-sex relationships and dynamics likely differ. We also excluded 104 households in which respondents skipped all housework measures for either spouse or provided implausible values for housework or other items, such as apparently reporting percentage splits for housework time rather than the number of hours or reporting more than 200 hours of housework for a single respondent. We also excluded those past the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile for total hours (for both spouses) of either core or non-core housework, reducing the sample by 13. Finally, we restricted our sample to cases in which at least the respondent or the spouse was employed. This leaves a sample of 1,043 respondents. We lose a small number of respondents due to missing data on other variables.

As an online opt-in panel, the sample is a non-random sample. Online opt-in panels raise some concerns about generalizability if respondents are systematically different than the population as a whole. For example, respondents might be more educated or younger than the population. However, we believe that generalizability may be similar to or better than traditional probability sampling techniques. Given very low contemporary response rates to conventional surveys (roughly 9% response rates in 2012), non-probability techniques like online panels now appear to do nearly as well as conventional techniques at predicting outcomes like election results (Wang et al. 2015). In a comparison of online opt-in surveys, Yougov.com did particularly well, matching benchmarks from national surveys better than other online survey firms (Rivers 2016; Kennedy et al. 2016). Benchmarks including questions on self-rated health, civic participation, presence of children, and responses from survey vendors were compared to official statistics from the Current Population Survey, National Health Survey, and American Community Survey. Pew

found that Yougov.com's weighting technique produced better results than many other estimates (Kennedy et al. 2016).

Weights for the MCS were generated using a sampling frame created with gender, age, race, education, employment, ideology, and political interest. The sampling frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) sample with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file). Data on interest in politics and party identification were matched to the sampling frame from the 2007 Pew Religious Life Survey. Propensity scores were used to generate weights.

### *Measures*

We test for effects of gender beliefs using one traditional measure traditional gender ideology and a newer measure of gender ideology based on respondents' beliefs about name changes at marriage. The traditional measure uses three questions drawn from the National Survey of Families and Households. These are "It is better if the man is the bread winner and the woman takes care of the family," "Preschool children are likely to suffer with working moms," and "Working couples should do equal work at home." Respondents are asked to respond whether they agree or disagree with these statements on a five point scale, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree. We reverse code the third question and sum the values on the three measures, so that higher values indicate less agreement with a separate spheres division of labor.

Our newer measure of gender ideology captures respondents' beliefs about whether and how men and women should change names upon marriage. Because women's participation in paid labor has become nearly a requirement in modern life, more traditional measures that focus on women's paid work may be less relevant for understanding modern beliefs about gender. Indeed, Hamilton and colleagues (2011) find that a measure of ideology based on name change

better predicts political ideology and beliefs. We use three questions to create an index of beliefs about gender and name change. Respondents were asked to rate, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, the following questions: “In the past, some states legally required a woman to change her name to her husband’s name.” “It is generally better if a woman changes her last name to her husband’s name when she marries,” and “It’s okay for a man to take his wife’s name when he marries.” We reverse-code the third item and sum these to create an index of name change, where higher values indicate more liberal views on name change ( $\alpha=.694$ ).

Our dependent variables include a range measures of outsourcing household tasks. Respondents were asked if, over the past week, they had paid anyone to help with housekeeping or cleaning. They were also asked if they had paid anyone to help with lawn care or gardening over the previous week. In addition, they were asked how many times over the previous week they had eaten at restaurants, and, in a separate question, how many times they had ordered take-out or delivery food. We combine the two food measures into a single measure of times outsourcing food preparation. Finally, respondents with children under the age of 6 were asked whether those children a) attended a day care outside the home and b) if they were cared for by a paid nanny or sitter.

The regression model includes controls for wife’s share of household income, total household income, the number of children age 0-13, wife’s age, wife’s work hours, husband’s work hours, whether the respondent is white, and whether the respondent has completed some college or has a college degree.

### **Analytic approach**

We model each of our dependent variables separately. Four of our dependent variables are dichotomous, and we use logistic regression for these variables. Our measure of food outsourcing is continuous, so we use OLS. All results are weighted.



## Preliminary results

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for our dependent variables and the variables we include in the analysis. Out of the five types of outsourcing measures, eating out is unsurprisingly the most prevalent form of household labor outsourcing (85%), followed by day care (29%), gardening or lawn service (13%), babysitting or nanny (12%), and housekeeping (9%). Women make on average 33% of the family income and work fewer hours per week than their male partners. The average gender beliefs of respondents are moderate to liberal, according to both surname beliefs and liberal gender ideology measures. The correlation between these two measures is .52, which is a moderate correlation but suggests that these two measures capture at least some separate components of gender ideology.

Table 2 shows results for outsourcing routine household labor: housekeeping, gardening and lawn, and eating out. We find that respondents with liberal gender ideology are more likely to outsource housekeeping and food, but that gender beliefs seem to play no role in gardening and lawn. These results are generally consistent with hypothesis 1, which posits that the preference for homemade goods will deter outsourcing for gender conservatives. The fact that gardening and lawn is less responsive to gender beliefs might be because the value placed on home production is linked to feminine tasks only. Men are more likely to be in charge of mowing the lawn but their gendered selves are not crucially linked to this activity, neither is the quality of lawn a function of it being “homemade.”

The coefficients for control variables show that higher income households are more likely to outsource each of the three household tasks. Somewhat surprisingly, women’s share of earnings and work hours are only relevant for outsourcing food, but not for outsourcing housekeeping. This result is inconsistent with previous studies showing that women’s income is more important than men’s for outsourcing housekeeping (de Ruijter, Treas, and Cohen 2005).

However, we note that those articles typically examined men's and women's income separately rather than measuring women's share of household income. Eating out is less prevalent when women earn a larger share of household income, but more prevalent when women work more hours. This is a somewhat puzzling finding. Although we control for household income, women with higher shares of household incomes tend to be low earners and this might produce this negative coefficient. Lastly, and consistent with previous research, we find that respondents with college education and above are more likely to outsource housekeeping.

Table 3 presents results for outsourcing care labor among the subset sample with children under the age of 6. We find that respondents with traditional gender beliefs, measured by their opinion on changing surname, are less likely to hire nannies or babysitters. Gender beliefs do not seem to condition the decision to outsource care via day care, however. Again, these results offer partial support for hypothesis 1, which expects gender conservatives to prefer home and family raised kids. The fact that the association between neither measure of gender beliefs and day care is not statistically significant is ambiguous. On the one hand, the preference for homemade goods suggests that gender conservatives who outsource care labor would prefer a home-based method, like nanny or babysitter. On the other hand, day care use is widespread and could be ideologically uncontroversial.

Control variables indicate that households with higher incomes are more likely to use daycare but not more likely to hire nannies or babysitters. Using day care is also more likely when wives earn a larger share of household income. When respondents have some college are more likely to use day care and less likely to use nannies or babysitters.

### **Next steps**

Prior to PAA we will run additional analyses to incorporate measures on housework division of labor and additional ideology measures. We will also examine different modeling

specifications to tease out how the relationship between gender beliefs and outsourcing operates through and independently of sociodemographic and economic variables.

### **Limitations**

Although some research suggests that husbands' and wives' ideology has different effects (Greenstein 1996; Evertsson 2014), our data only have measures from the primary respondent, so we are unable to test whether there are different effects.

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Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Proportion with housekeeping	1,428	0.09	0.28	0	1
Proportion with gardening or lawn service	1,424	0.13	0.34	0	1
Proportion with any eating out in last week	1,390	0.85	0.36	0	1
# of times eating out in last week	1,390	2.48	2.36	0	21
Day care	269	0.29	0.45	0	1
Babysitting or nanny	268	0.12	0.33	0	1
Wife's share of income	1,405	0.33	0.35	0	1
Surname beliefs	1,432	8.12	3.14	3	15
Liberal gender ideology	1,419	14.00	2.60	6	20
Total income	1,405	70529.91	71525.27	0	805000
Children age 0-13 in household	1,439	0.49	0.89	0	7
Wife's age	1,439	50.40	14.10	19	97
Wife's hours	1,434	22.43	20.57	0	90
Husband's hours	1,436	29.47	22.76	0	90
Respondent is white	1,439	0.75	0.44	0	1
Respondent has some college	1,439	0.29	0.45	0	1
Respondent has college or more	1,439	0.33	0.47	0	1

Table 2: Regressions of the probability of outsourcing each type of service on ideology and other covariates

	Housekeeping	Gardening and Lawn	Eating Out
Wife's share of income	-0.327 (-0.64)	-0.087 (-0.21)	-1.776*** (-4.86)
Opinion on Changing Surname	0.109** (2.70)	0.017 (0.53)	-0.049 (-1.59)
Traditional gender ideology	-0.055 (-1.17)	-0.062 (-1.60)	0.095* (2.57)
Total household income/1000	0.006*** (4.60)	0.005*** (3.82)	0.003 (1.73)
Children age 0-13	0.262* (2.08)	-0.033 (-0.29)	0.043 (0.42)
Wife's age	0.032** (3.28)	0.023** (2.88)	-0.005 (-0.64)
Wife's work hours	0.002 (0.29)	-0.005 (-0.66)	0.030*** (4.27)
Husband's work hours	-0.006 (-0.98)	-0.002 (-0.37)	-0.018*** (-3.82)
Respondent is white	-0.479* (-2.01)	-0.262 (-1.31)	-0.452* (-2.28)
Respondent has some college	-0.126 (-0.41)	0.125 (0.55)	0.077 (0.40)
Respondent has college or more	0.854*** (3.30)	0.678** (3.20)	0.132 (0.65)
Constant	-4.552*** (-5.32)	-2.635*** (-3.80)	1.602* (2.49)
Observations	1365	1361	1329

*t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 3: Regressions of child outsourcing on name ideology

	Day care	Nanny or babysitter
Wife's share of income	1.843* (2.00)	0.979 (0.74)
Opinion on Changing Surname	0.045 (0.75)	-0.192* (-2.32)
Traditional gender ideology	-0.011 (-0.15)	-0.082 (-0.76)
Total household income	0.008* (2.20)	0.001 (0.14)
Children age 0-13	-0.271 (-1.36)	0.373 (1.65)
Wife's age	-0.016 (-0.77)	-0.031 (-1.16)
Wife's work hours	0.005 (0.40)	0.037 (1.82)
Husband's work hours	0.010 (0.81)	0.019 (1.21)
Respondent is white	0.719 (1.90)	0.054 (0.11)
Respondent has some college	1.079* (2.21)	-1.557* (-2.17)
Respondent has college or more	0.766 (1.50)	-0.245 (-0.41)
Constant	-3.087* (-2.27)	-0.922 (-0.52)
Observations	258	257

*t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$