

CONFLICT AND HOUSEWORK: DOES COUNTRY
CONTEXT MATTER?

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Abstract:

In this paper, I analyze housework conflict cross-nationally using a unique multi-level data set that pairs the 2004 European Social Survey data for respondents in 25 nations with societal measures of gender equality. At the individual-level, I test two theoretical approaches to subjective housework considerations: the distributive justice and relative resources perspectives. The results support both of these theories for men and women. At the country level, I test the relationship between housework conflict and two country-level measures: societal gender equality and rates of full-time female labor force participation. The results show a negative relationship between housework conflict and gender equality for men and women in countries with high rates of full-time female labor force participation. For those in countries with limited access to the labor force, the relationship between housework conflict and gender equality is positive for men and women. These results suggest a dynamic relationship between country context and individual negotiations over housework.

The division of household labor is a gendered process through which women, regardless of employment status, assume a larger share of the total hours of household chores (Dex 2004; Sanchez and Thompson 1997). Multiple theoretical explanations have been proposed to explain this imbalance at the individual-level. Resource theorists argue that spouses' individual economic resources including education, labor force participation and income are exchanged for participation in household chores (Green and Cooke 2005; Lennon and Rosenfield 1994; Yogeve and Brett 1985). Gender theorists argue that divisions of housework are drawn along socialized gender role lines, with women assuming the lion's share of household chores to demonstrate their gender identities in heterosexual interaction (Berk 1985; West and Zimmerman 1987). However, housework must be understood in context as many comparative scholars have shown (Batalova and Cohen 2002; Baxter 1997; Bittman et al. 2003; Cooke 2006; Fuwa 2004; Hook 2006; Geist 2005). For example, Fuwa (2004) finds that women living in countries with stronger societal gender equality have more equal divisions of housework tasks. Similarly, Geist (2005) and Hook (2006) show that men are doing more housework and women less in multiple countries.

These approaches provide valuable insight into divisions of housework as an outcome but neglect partners' interpersonal negotiations over divisions of labor (Kluwer, Heesink and Van der Vliert 1997). Understanding housework conflict is essential as Amato (2007) argues: "These days, disagreement over housework and child care is one of the most important determinants of marital quality" (p. 308). In fact, disagreement over housework is associated with depression (Glass and Fujimoto 1994), marital dissatisfaction and stress (Piña and Bergeston 1993). While many have documented actual inequality in housework hours, few have investigated which

couples engage in conflict over their divisions of housework and how the macro-context may condition this conflict. This paper addresses this gap by applying a unique cross-national multi-level data set to the following questions: which individuals report the most housework conflict and how does a country's gender egalitarianism and rate of female labor force participation affect the frequency of couples' housework conflict?

The following paper will discuss the individual-level theoretical approaches to housework as well as introduce a country-level framework for analyzing multi-level data on housework conflict. After testing two competing individual-level theories, I will present the multi-level findings for two key country-level variables: a country's societal gender empowerment score and rates of women's full-time labor force participation. Finally, the discussion section will situate these findings within the broader housework literature.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO HOUSEWORK CONFLICT

Theoretical approaches to objective divisions of housework, including the total household housework hours and partner's relative contributions, have been well established. Theories on subjective considerations of housework, however, are limited. Two theoretical approaches to perceived unfairness, the distributive justice and relative resources perspectives, have been proposed and empirically supported. While these theories center on the subjective perception of unfairness, it is reasonable to expect that arrangements perceived unfair are likely to also be sources of conflict. These theories are outlined below.

Distributive Justice Perspective

The distributive justice perspective (Thompson 1991) identifies three sources of perceived unfairness: *outcomes*, *comparisons*, and *justifications*. *Outcomes* include the actual

division of housework hours and tasks between spouses. According to this theory, male participation in housework hours, especially female-typed chores, increases wives' subjective perceptions of housework fairness. *Comparative referents* measure the extent to which individuals compare their divisions to others. Individuals can make within- or between-gender comparisons to determine the equity of their housework division. Finally, *justifications* measure individual's ideological traditionalism regarding gender roles. Individuals with more traditional expectations for divisions of men and women's work may view unequal divisions of housework as just.

The distributive justice theory has received much empirical support. For example, couples with more equitable divisions of housework, report more housework satisfaction (Baxter and Western 1998; Blair and Johnson 1992) and are more likely to view their divisions of housework as fair (Baxter 2000). Women who compare their divisions to other women tend to report less housework conflict, as do those who compare their husband's housework to that of other men (Major 1987). By contrast, women who make within-gender comparisons tend to report greater unfairness (Nordenmark and Nyman 2003). Women with more traditional gender role ideologies are more likely to accept a traditional division of labor than women with more egalitarian views (Lennon and Rosenfield 1994). For this study, I expect that individuals with more equal divisions of housework and with more traditional gender role ideologies will report less housework conflict.ⁱ

Relative Resources

The relative resource perspective states that wives' resources, in terms of labor force participation, income and education, relative to their husband/partners' provide women with

more bargaining power for a more equal divisions of housework (DeMaris and Longmore 1996; Lennon and Rosenfield 1994). Indeed, women who contribute a greater portion of the total family income perform less housework, have husbands who perform more housework and have smaller gender gaps in housework (Bianchi et al. 2000). In addition, wives' education is positively associated with their husbands' participation in housework (Sanchez and Thompson 1997). On the other hand, wives with fewer resources are less likely to argue over unequal divisions of housework because they are more dependent on their husbands for financial support (DeMaris and Longmore 1996; Lennon and Rosenfield 1994). Thus, I expect respondents with fewer resources relative to their partner to report the least housework conflict.

COUNTRY-LEVEL SOURCES OF CONFLICT

In addition to couples' individual-level characteristics, women's country-level resources may also affect couples' divisions of household labor. Specifically, I expect that country level gender egalitarianism and female labor force participation rates should affect conflict over housework in distinct ways. The relationships between these variables are outlined below.

Gender Egalitarianism

A country's gender egalitarianism could affect housework conflict in multiple ways (table 1). First, women in high gender equality countries may be more likely to report housework conflict with their husbands because these women feel empowered to challenge unequal divisions of housework. Also, women in high gender egalitarianism countries may have more enforceable threats if they are more financially independent as a result of societal gender equality. Men in countries that support gender egalitarianism may also report high levels of conflict if they are challenging women's empowered role especially if these men feel they are

doing enough or too much housework. Thus, country-level measures of gender egalitarianism may be positively associated with conflict about housework for both men and women.

On the other hand, men and women in countries that exhibit strong gender egalitarianism may report significantly less conflict with their partners over housework because these respondents do, in fact, have more equal divisions of housework. Previous cross-national research has found a positive relationship between country-level gender egalitarianism and more equal divisions of housework (Batalova and Cohen 2002; Fuwa 2004) – this equality may translate into less housework conflict. Thus, country-level gender egalitarianism may be negatively correlated with men and women’s conflict over housework.

For women living in low gender equality countries, country-level gender egalitarianism may be positively associated with housework conflict. Women in low gender equality countries are likely to have the most unequal divisions of housework and may report more conflict as a result of this inequality. In addition, countries with high mean housework hours tend to have high housework hours for both sexes, a factor which may be positively correlated with conflict for men and women. Supported by traditional societal gender roles, these men may expect their wives to perform all of the housework and thus report conflict over their housework participation. Thus, men and women in low gender equality countries may report higher levels of housework conflict.

On the other hand, women in low gender equality countries may report low levels of conflict over housework because they are complicit with their divisions of housework. According to the “doing gender” perspective, housework in one way for heterosexual men and women to claim and convey their gender identities within a family context (Berk 1985; West and

Zimmerman 1987). In countries with traditional gender role expectations for men and women, performing the majority of the family housework may be one way for women to display their gender identities and men and women may be satisfied with this arrangement. Thus, individuals in low gender egalitarianism countries may report low levels of conflict.

Table 1: Potential effects of Increased Gender Egalitarianism on Spouses' Housework Conflict		
	↑ Conflict	↓ Conflict
↑ Gender Egalitarianism	Women Empowered / Men Challenging	Marital Happiness
↓ Gender Egalitarianism	Women Suffer/ Men Dissatisfied	Women Complicit/ Men Satisfied

Rates of Full-Time Female Labor Force Participation

In addition to a country's gender egalitarianism ideology, rates of full-time female labor force participation may also affect conflict over housework (table 2). Although countries supporting women's full-time employment may also support non-traditional roles for women and thus be equally high on gender egalitarianism, there is reason to believe that these two measures have distinct effects on housework conflict. For example, respondents in countries with high rates of full-time female employment may experience greater time demands balancing work and family and thus report more housework conflict. In addition, women in countries with high labor force participation rates may feel more pressure to work full-time and thus may be a greater risk for conflict over housework. Men in countries with high rates of full-time female employment may also report high levels of conflict because without a wife in the home, these men are

expected to do more housework. Thus, rates of female full-time employment may be positively associated with both partners' conflict over housework.

On the other hand, couples in countries with high rates of female labor force participation may have developed family arrangements that support a dual-earner family structure. In fact, women's work hours are negatively associated with total family housework hours (Bianchi et al. 2002). Similarly, full-time working women are more likely to use market substitutes to reduce household responsibilities (Treas and Ruitjer forthcoming). Conflict over housework in countries with high rates of full-time female employment may be low because both partners housework input is minimal. Thus, high rates of female labor force participation may be negatively associated with housework conflict.

For respondents in countries with low rates of female labor force participation, full-time female labor force participation may be positively associated with conflict. Women in these countries may view their limited access to the labor force as a source of injustice and may challenge this inequality within the home. Men in these countries are likely to have strong attachments to the labor force as the families' breadwinner. As a result, men may feel their financial contribution to the household excuses them from all housework and requests for their participation may be met with conflict. Thus, low rates of female labor force participation may be positively associated with housework conflict.

On the other hand, men and women in countries with low rates of female labor force participation may report low levels of conflict because they are satisfied with traditional divisions of roles. According to the resource perspective, the specialization of one partner in the labor force and one in the household increases efficiency (Becker 1991), a factor that may reduce

conflict. Similarly, partners may specialize in the market or home to reduce status competition between spouses (Parsons 1943). This specialization may be more efficient and reduce potential sources of conflict. Thus, low rates of full-time female labor force participation may be negatively associated with conflict.

Table 2: Potential effects of Rates of Full-time Female Labor Force Participation (FLFP) on Spouses' Housework Conflict		
	↑ Conflict	↓ Conflict
↑ FLFP	Women overwhelmed/ Men unable to offload	Support for Dual-Roles
↓ FLFP	Women contemptuous/ Men justified	Support for Breadwinner/Homemaker

DATA

This study matches individual-level data from the 2004 European Social Survey for twenty-five nations with a unique macro-level data set compiled from the 2004 United Nations Human Development Report (UNHDR). The European Social Survey (ESS) is a cross-national collaboration of researchers in twenty-five European countries and includes data on Europe's changing institutions, beliefs, and behaviors. To date, three modules of the ESS have been collected; the 2004 ESS includes a module on family, work and well-being. The United Nations Human Development Report utilizes data collected from populations throughout the world. The UNHDR provides measures of a variety of demographic characteristics of a country, including rates of female labor force participation and indices measuring women's gender empowerment.

Respondents were selected if they are 18 or older, are married, separated/divorced, single or widowed and report currently living with a partner and a housework conflict score. The total sample size is 26,752 and includes data from all twenty-five nations.

LEVEL-1 MEASURES

Housework Conflict

Housework conflict serves as the dependent variable for this study. Respondents were asked the following question: “How frequently do you conflict with your partner about how to divide the housework?” Responses are on a seven-point scale: never, less than once a month, once a month, several times a month, once a week, several times a week, everyday. Preliminary analyses of the data showed a right-skew in the data with about half of the sample reporting some conflict and half no conflict. As a result, the dependent variable is coded dichotomously with one representing some reported conflict and zero representing no (never) conflict.

Outcomes

From the ESS, two measures of housework were created. First, respondents are asked to estimate the total number of housework hours the members of the household perform in a typical week and a typical weekend. These values were summed to create a total weekly housework hour measure. Those who were missing, refused or reported that they did not know, were excluded from the analysis.ⁱⁱ Then, respondents were asked in separate questions, what percentage of the weekly and weekend housework they and their spouse/partner performed. These were coded into dichotomously measures for respondent does more housework (1=respondent does more than 50%); partners share housework equally (1= respondent and spouse do 50%); and spouse does more of the housework (1= respondent does less than 50%). Respondents who were missing, refused or reported that they don't know were excluded from the sample.ⁱⁱⁱ

Justifications

The gender egalitarianism index is measured through a factor analysis based on levels of agreement (5-point scale) to the following statements: a woman should be prepared to cut down her paid work for the sake of her family; when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women; when there are children in the home, parents should stay together even if they don't get along; a person's family ought to be his or her main priority in life. Those missing data on one or more responses were excluded from the analysis. The Chronbach's alpha for this index is 0.62 and higher scores represent more egalitarian gender role ideologies.

Relative Resources

To measure relative income, respondents were asked what portion they contributed to the total family income. These responses were recoded into three measures: respondent is the breadwinner (1= respondent contributes more than 50% of the income); respondent and spouse are equal contributors (1= respondent and spouse contribute 50% of the income); respondent is dependent (1= respondent contributes less than 50% of the income). Total household income is also included in this study. The respondents were asked to rank their total family income relative to others in their country on an alphabetic scale – the ESS team then converted these letters to numbers on a 1 to 12 point scale, which is included in this analysis. Higher values represent greater household income relative to those in the same country. Those missing data or who refused the question were excluded from the sample.^{iv} The relative work hours measure is the difference between the respondent's work hours and those of his or her spouse/partner. Higher values represent the respondent's greater labor force contribution. Labor force hours were capped at 120 hours a week for both the respondent and the spouse – those reporting more than

120 hours were deleted from the analysis.^v Similar to relative work hours, relative education is the computed difference between the respondent's education and that of one's spouse/partner, measured on a categorical scale ranging from 1 for no primary education to 7 for some second stage of tertiary.

Housework Controls

At the individual-level, I control for a range of household characteristics. Three binary variables measure who is the housework decisionmaker: the respondent (1= always me and usually me); equal decisionmakers (1= equal between spouses); and the spouse (1= usually the partner and always the partner). Housework stress and monotony are measured on a 7-point scale with greater values representing more stress and monotony that the respondent experienced in a typical week.

Individual Controls

The individual controls measure variation in the respondent's basic demographic characteristics. Marital status is dichotomously coded into four categories: married, separated/divorced, widowed and never married. Again, it is important to note that all of the respondents included in the sample reported living with a partner. Thus, the reported marital status variable should be interpreted in the context of cohabitation. The children under 6 and children 6 to 17 measures represent the reported number of children within these age ranges currently living in the respondent's home. Finally, age is included in the analyses.

LEVEL-2 MEASURES

Gender Empowerment

A country's gender egalitarianism is measured through the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) used in previous cross-national research (Batalova and Cohen 2002; Fuwa 2004). The GEM is an index created annually by the United Nations Development Report statistical division to represent variation among countries in terms of societal gender equality. The GEM is calculated using the percentage of women in parliamentary seats; the percentage of female legislators, senior officials and managers; the percentage of female professional and technical workers; and the ratio of estimated female to male earned income for full-time workers (UNDP 2004). Each country is assigned a GEM score ranging from 0 to 1 with higher values representing greater societal gender equality.

Rates of Full-time Female Labor Force Participation

Rates of full-time female labor force participation are from the United Nations Development Report (2004). Full-time female labor force participation is a ratio of the number of women working full-time divided by the number of working age women in the country. Values range from 0 to 100% with higher values representing greater full-time labor force attachment.

ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

The analyses in this study were performed using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) 6.0. I estimate Bernoulli (1/0) models as follows:

Level-1 Model:

$$\text{Prob (Conflict 1=1/}\beta) = \phi$$

$$\text{Log } [\phi/(1-\phi)] = \eta$$

$$\eta = \beta_0 + \beta_1(x)$$

Level-2 Model:

$$\beta_0 = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(\text{GEM}) + \gamma_{02} (\text{Full-time FLFP}) + \mu_0$$

Where $\text{Prob (Conflict 1=1/}\beta) = \phi$ are the cumulative probabilities, η is the cumulative logits and β_0 is the cumulative logits at level-2. The results presented are for the population-average model; the intercept in this model is the expected log-odds of repetition for a person with zero values on the dichotomous predictors and population average values on the continuous measures.

Compared to the unit-specific model, the population-average model provided more conservative standard errors.

RESULTS

Table 3 provides a descriptive overview of the dependent and level-2 variables. Mean conflict represents the percentage of respondents who report some conflict between partners. As the table depicts, overall men are more likely to report conflict than women and the rate of conflict varies by country. Men and women in Finland report the most conflict (78.8 and 75.5% respectively) and women and men in Turkey the least (18.5 and 19.5% respectively). In terms of GEM scores, Turkey has the lowest GEM country at 0.29 and Norway the highest at 0.908 and for rates of full-time female labor force participation, Ireland has the lowest rate at 37.9% and Iceland the highest at 66.7%. The descriptive statistics depict a wide range in the dependent variable and level-2 measures.

Table 4 presents the population-average log odds for women's reported housework conflict at level-1. Model 1 includes measures of the distributive justice perspective, net of household and individual controls. For *outcomes* women who perform more housework report significantly more housework conflict (0.195 $p < 0.05$) than those whose husbands perform the majority of the chores. In terms of *justifications*, women who hold more egalitarian gender role ideologies also report more housework conflict (0.244 $p < 0.001$).

Four household controls are significantly associated with housework conflict for women. Respondents who are housework decisionmakers and those who share decisionmaking equally with their spouse report significantly less housework conflict than those whose husbands determine each partner's household share (-0.572 $p < 0.001$ and -0.866 $p < 0.001$ respectively). Those who find their housework to be stressful and monotonous report more housework conflict (0.173 $p < 0.001$ and 0.163 $p < 0.001$ respectively). The housework controls remain significant and in the same direction in the subsequent models.

For women, three individual controls are significant. Compared to the married, those who are separated/divorced or widowed report significantly less housework conflict (-0.266 $p < 0.050$ and -0.549 $p < 0.050$ respectively) and the never married report significantly more (0.324 $p < 0.010$) – it is important to note that all of the respondents in the sample report currently living with a partner and these findings should be interpreted in the context of cohabitation. The individual controls for women remain significant and in the same direction in subsequent models.

Model 2 of Table 4 includes only the level-1 relative resource measures, net of household and individual controls. Respondents who contribute the majority or equal levels of household

income report significantly less housework conflict than those who are financially dependent on their spouse/partner (1.79 $p < 0.010$ and 0.170 $p < 0.001$ respectively). Similarly, total household income is positively associated with housework conflict (0.067 $p < 0.001$). Women's work hour contribution relative to their partner's is positively correlated with housework conflict (0.003 $p < 0.010$). Again, the housework and individual controls in Model 2 are consistent with those in Model 1.

Model 3 is the final level-1 model that includes both the distributive justice and relative resource measures net of controls. Consistent with Model 1, women who perform more housework than their partners report more conflict compared to those whose spouse/partner performs the majority of the housework. In fact, net of other controls, the effect of housework hours increases from 0.195 ($p < 0.050$) to 0.268 ($p < 0.010$). The effect of gender role ideology decreases slightly in Model 3 compared to Model 1 (0.244 $p < 0.001$ to 0.213 $p < 0.001$) as does the effect of household income (0.067 $p < 0.001$ to 0.058 $p < 0.001$). Female breadwinners report slightly more housework conflict in the final model than in Model 2 (0.179 $p < 0.010$ to 0.185 $p < 0.010$).

Table 5 follows Table 4 and presents the population-average log odds for men's housework conflict. Consistent with the previous table, Model 1 includes the distributive justice measures, net of household and individual controls. For *outcomes*, men who perform more housework than or levels equivalent to their spouse/partner report significantly less conflict than those whose spouse/partner does all of the housework (-0.274 $p < 0.001$ and -0.134 $p < 0.05$ respectively). Similar to the results for women, respondents who hold more egalitarian gender role ideologies report significantly more conflict (0.125 $p < 0.001$).

Model 1 in Table 5 also includes household and individual controls for men. In terms of household controls, respondents who are equal housework decisionmakers with their spouse/partner report significantly less housework conflict than those whose spouse/partner makes all of the decisions (-0.438 $p < 0.001$). Unlike for women, however, respondents who are the decision-makers are not significantly different than those whose spouses make all of the housework decisions. Similar to women, housework stress and monotony are positively associated with housework conflict (0.160 $p < 0.001$ and 0.137 $p < 0.001$ respectively). In terms of individual controls, for men the number of children under 6 and 6 to 17 are positively correlated with conflict (0.174 $p < 0.050$ and 0.146 $p < 0.010$ respectively), a relationship that is not significant for women. In analyses not shown, the relationship between housework conflict and the following dichotomous variables were analyzed: children under 6 (1/0), children 6 to 17 (1/0) and any children present (1/0). For men, the relationship between these variables remained positive and significant and for women, these relationships remained statistically insignificant suggesting robustness of this finding for men. The relationship between the housework and individual controls remain significant and in the same direction in the subsequent models.

Model 2 includes relative resources measures, net of household and individual controls. Similar to women, men who are breadwinners report more housework conflict than those who are dependent (0.169 $p < 0.010$) but men who are equal contributors report no more conflict than those who are dependent, a finding that varies from that for women. Similar to the results for women, total household income is positively associated with housework conflict (0.055 $p < 0.010$) and increases in men's share of the work hours are negatively correlated with housework conflict (-0.003 $p < 0.001$). The housework controls decreased slightly in this model but the effect of

having children under 6 in the home increased in value and significance (0.174 $p < 0.050$ to 0.187 $p < 0.010$).

Model 3 is the final level-1 model that includes measures of the distributive justice and relative resources perspectives, net of controls. Consistent with Model 1, men's participation in housework, either as an equal or majority contributor, is negatively associated with housework conflict. In fact, the relationship between these variables and housework conflict increases slightly with the inclusion of relative resources measures (from -0.274 to -0.284 $p < 0.001$ for the respondent doing more housework and -0.134 to -0.141 $p < 0.010$ for equal contributors). The effect of gender egalitarianism decreases from 0.125 ($p < 0.001$) to 0.096 ($p < 0.010$) in the final model. Similarly, the coefficient for the respondent being a breadwinner and housework income decreases (0.169 $p < 0.010$ to 0.134 $p < 0.050$; 0.055 $p < 0.010$ to 0.050 $p < 0.001$ respectively). The household and individual controls remain largely constant throughout the three models.

Model 4 seeks to explain the anomalous relationship between children and housework conflict for men. As stated earlier, the number of children under 6 and 6 to 17 are positively associated with housework conflict for men but not women. To further investigate this variation, I ran a series of level-1 models that included interaction effects for the children variables (models not shown). None of the interaction effects proved significant nor did they explain the main effect of children on housework conflict. The inclusion of level-2 interaction terms, however, is significant but does not completely explain the main effect of children on housework conflict for men. Specifically, children increase housework conflict in all countries, but this effect is magnified by a country's gender egalitarianism (1.184 $p < 0.001$ for men with children under 6 and 1.158 $p < 0.001$ for men with children 6 to 17). This relationship is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1 presents the relationship between GEM and the log-odds of conflict for three groups of men: those with one child under 6, those with one child 6 to 17 and those without children. The level-1 effects are estimated for populations with mean characteristics and who score zero on the dichotomous measures – thus, the figure is for a respondent who has a spouse who does more housework, is not the breadwinner, works equivalent hours to his spouse/partner, is not an equal decisionmaker and who has mean gender role ideologies, income, housework stress and housework monotony. For men without children, GEM has no significant effect on housework conflict. For those with a child under 6 and one 6 to 17, the relationship between GEM and conflict is positive with men with one child under 6 reporting the most conflict. The relationship in the figure is estimated for men with one child but the effect is larger for those with more children.

Table 6 adds level-2 measures, GEM and the percent of women working full-time, to the final individual-level model for women. Model 1 includes country-specific gender egalitarianism (GEM) net of individual-level measures. When included alone, GEM does not significantly affect housework conflict for women. The individual-level controls remain significant and in the same direction as in Table 4. Model 2 includes country-level female labor force participation rates, net of individual-level measure. For women, rates of country-level female labor force participation are positively associated with housework conflict (0.046 $p < 0.001$). With the inclusion of women's country-level labor force attachment, the individual-level measure of total housework hours becomes significant (0.009 $p < 0.05$), demonstrating that variations in women's labor force participation at the country-level masks the relationship

between individual housework hours and housework conflict. The relationship remains positive and significant in subsequent models.

Model 3 includes both level-2 measures, GEM and full-time female labor force participation. Consistent with Models 1 and 2, rates of full-time female labor force participation remain positive and significant and GEM has no significant effect. Similarly, housework hours remain positive and significant (0.044 $p < 0.001$) and all other individual-level controls remain consistent with previous models. GEM and full-time female labor force participation, however, may not function in isolation as countries with high gender egalitarianism are also likely to have high rates of full-time female labor force participation. Thus, Model 4 includes an interaction effect between GEM and full-time female labor force participation, a relationship that is negatively associated with housework conflict (-0.235 $p < 0.001$). Once the negative relationship between housework conflict and the interaction term between GEM and full-time female labor force participation is controlled, the GEM variable becomes positive and significant for women (13.629 $p < 0.001$) – the rate of full-time female labor force participation remains positive in the final model (0.211 $p < 0.001$).

Figure 2 graphically illustrates the level-2 effects for women living in countries with rates of full-time female labor force participation at 25, 50 and 100%. The lines are estimated for populations with mean characteristics and who score zero on the dichotomous measures – thus, the figure is for a respondent who has a spouse who does more housework, is not the breadwinner, works equivalent hours to her spouse/partner, has no children, is not an equal decisionmaker and who has mean gender role ideologies, income, housework stress and housework monotony.

At the left tail of the table representing women in countries with the lowest GEM score, those with the highest rates of female labor force participation (100%) report the most conflict, those at 25% the least and those at 50% fall in between these two. For women in countries with rates of female labor force participation at 50% or 100%, the relationship between GEM and housework conflict is negative. For those in countries with rates of female labor force participation at 25%, the relationship between GEM and housework conflict is slightly positive. In fact, at the right tail of the distribution, representing women in high GEM countries, an opposite pattern emerges with women in countries with rates of female labor force participation at 25% reporting the most conflict, those at 100% the least and those at 50% falling in between these two. Thus, women in high GEM countries who have limited access to the labor force (25%) report the most conflict and those with the highest rates (100%) the least. In fact, the log-odds of reporting conflict in high female labor force participation countries becomes negative with a GEM score of 0.45 or higher. These results demonstrate that increases in societal gender equality and full-time female labor force participation are negatively associated with housework conflict.

Following Table 6, Table 7 presents the population-average log-odds for men at level-2.^{vi} Unlike for women, gender empowerment is positively associated with housework conflict for men (1.658 $p < 0.05$). The individual-level effects are consistent with Table 2 and across the level-2 models. Model 2 includes rates of full-time female labor force participation, net of individual-level controls. As for women, rates for full-time female labor force participation are positively associated with housework conflict (0.041 $p < 0.001$). When both level-2 measures are included in Model 3, the coefficients remain positive and significant (1.435 $p < 0.05$ for GEM and

0.038 $p < 0.001$ for full-time female labor force participation). Finally, Model 4 includes an interaction term for GEM and full-time female labor force participation and consistent with the model for women, the interaction term is negative (-0.178 $p < 0.010$). The coefficients for GEM and full-time female labor force participation increase in size and remains positive and significant (10.907 $p < 0.010$ and 0.164 $p < 0.001$ respectively).

Figure 3 graphically presents these level-2 results with lines representing rates of full-time female labor force participation at 25, 50 and 100%. The lines are estimated using population means and zeros on the dichotomous measures – thus, the figure is for a respondent who has a spouse who does more housework, is not the breadwinner, works equivalent hours to his spouse/partner, has no children, is not an equal decisionmaker and who has mean gender role ideologies, income, housework stress and housework monotony.

At the left tail of the distribution representing countries with low GEM scores, men in countries with female labor force participation rates of 100% report the most conflict, those at 25% the least and those at 50% fall in between- these results are consistent with those for women. At the right tail of the distribution for high GEM countries, men in countries with female labor force participation rates of 100% report the least housework conflict, those at 25% the most and those at 50% fall in between these two, results consistent with those for women. In countries where all or half of the women work, the relationship between GEM and housework conflict is negative; in countries where only a quarter of the female population is employed full-time, the relationship between work conflict and GEM is positive - both findings are similar to those for women. Unlike for women, however, the log-odds values never become negative

demonstrating that men, regardless of GEM and rates of female labor force participation, still report some housework conflict.

DISCUSSION

This paper tested two competing individual-level hypotheses and introduced a new theoretical framework for multi-level analyses of housework conflict. The models were run separately for men and women to provide insight into the highly gendered process of divisions of household labor. In previous research, a significant relationship between individual-level housework hours and country-level gender empowerment has been established (Fuwa 2004). This is the first study, however, to extend this model to housework conflict.

From the individual-level data, two main themes emerge. First, both the distributive justice and relative resource perspectives are supported by the empirical results of this study, demonstrating the importance of including both of these theories in future housework conflict studies. The individual-level findings demonstrate that housework is highly contested in many households. Men and women report significantly less conflict when men increase their own housework hours and women who do all of the housework report the most conflict. Similarly, women and men with more egalitarian gender role ideologies report more conflict than do their traditional counterparts. Previous studies have argued that there is a stall in the gender revolution over housework (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2004; Hochschild 1989) and that most women view their unequal division of housework as fair (Sanchez and Thompson 1994). These results, however, suggest that for many couples, arguments over unequal divisions of housework are not accepted but rather highly contested.

Second, individual resources play a significant role in housework conflict. Women and men who are dependent report the least housework conflict. Similarly, women report more conflict with each increase in their relative household income contribution, demonstrating that smaller gains in women's resources are associated with more housework conflict. Although some have argued that women's relative resources are declining in value (Gupta 2006, 2007), this study demonstrates that women's relative resources play an important role in housework conflict. Similarly, for both men and women, increases in women's relative work hours are associated with more conflict and women who are the housework decisionmakers and thus have the power to allocate the total housework hours report less conflict. This suggests that slight gains in women's resources empower women to challenge divisions of household labor.

Finally, women's individual characteristics are significantly associated with housework conflict. Marital status plays an important role in determining the level of housework conflict for women but not for men. Specifically, the never married report the most housework conflict followed by the married, divorced and widowed. This can be explained in multiple ways. First, for many, cohabitation is often a time of negotiating roles between partners especially in terms of divisions of housework – these negotiations may lead to more conflict for the never married compared to women of other marital statuses. Simultaneously, the shifts from singlehood to cohabitation and then cohabitation to marriage are associated with increases in women's share of the housework hours (Gupta 1999). Women at these statuses may be challenging these increases in housework conflict through housework conflict. Divorced women who re-partner report significantly lower housework hours than when married, which may explain their lower reports of housework conflict. It is noteworthy, however, that marital status is not significantly

associated with housework conflict for men, suggesting the shifts in housework patterns associated with marital status do not alter men's reported conflict. This finding may be explained by the sample that includes only respondents who are cohabiting. Thus, these men may not experience significant variation in housework conflict because they have a wife/partner present in the home – an analysis of non-partnered men may provide different results for marital statuses.

Men do significantly differ from women in terms of the effect of children on housework conflict. For men, the number of children in the home is positively associated with housework conflict, a relationship not significant for women. In addition, this positive relationship is significantly larger in more gender egalitarian countries. Cross-national researchers have noted that in many countries the double burden of work and housework is associated with declining fertility rates (Cooke 2004, Torr & Short 2004); high GEM countries in this sample have some of the lowest fertility rates in the world. In this context, children, and the work associated with their care, may be contested especially for men who, in these countries, account for a larger share of the housework (Fuwa 2004).

The level-2 results provide empirical support for the theoretical framework outlined in this study but demonstrate an interrelationship between GEM and female labor force participation. For male and female respondents who live in countries with rates of female labor force participation of 50% or higher, country-level gender egalitarianism is negatively associated with housework conflict. Following the theoretical framework presented in this paper, these results suggest marital conflict in low GEM countries. On the other hand, respondents in high GEM countries report low-levels of housework conflict suggesting that these couples experience

marital happiness— a relationship that appears to be stronger for women than men as the conflict coefficient actually becomes negative. For men and women in low female labor force participation countries, the relationship between GEM and housework conflict is slightly positive, suggesting that increases in societal gender equality lead women to feel empowered to challenge their divisions of housework and lead men to challenge this new female role.

The results for rates of female labor force participation suggest that men and women in high female labor force participation countries (100%) experience the greatest benefits to housework conflict from increases in gender egalitarianism. In the low GEM countries, men and women in high female labor force participation countries (100%) report the most housework conflict suggesting that women are feeling overwhelmed and men are unable to offload their housework to their wives. As GEM increases, however, men and women in high female labor force participation countries report the least housework conflict suggesting that these countries provide support for partner's dual-roles; the pattern is similar for men and women in countries with moderate rates of female labor force participation (50%). For respondents in low-female labor force participation countries (25%), the relationship between men and women's housework conflict and the country's GEM score is slightly positive suggesting that there is support for traditional roles in low GEM countries and women begin to challenge these roles as societal equality increases.

Although the results provide support for GEM and rates of female labor force participation as separate contextual variables that affect housework conflict, ultimately the findings of this study demonstrate a complex interrelation between these two level-2 measures. Specifically, women and men in countries with high rates of female labor force participation who

are unable to access a welfare state that supports women, as measured through the GEM measure, report the most housework conflict. By contrast, women and men in high gender egalitarianism countries where women have limited access to the labor market report the most housework conflict. Men and women in countries that support non-traditional women's roles by promoting gender egalitarianism and providing women access to the labor market report the least housework conflict. What is most noteworthy is that women report significantly less conflict in high GEM/high female labor force participation countries than do men in these countries. In addition, the "tipping-point" for women to report a negative housework conflict value is a GEM score of about 0.45, a value that is less than half the total possible GEM score. This suggests that for women in high female labor force participation countries, slight increases in societal gender equality are associated with great reductions in housework conflict. For men, however, the gains in gender egalitarianism are never associated with negative values, suggesting that GEM does not reduce men's housework conflict at the same rate as for women. This is probably because women's greater gender egalitarianism, although associated with lower total housework hours for both partners, is associated with men's increased housework participation (Fuwa 2004). Thus, men may report more conflict than women because they are being asked to share a larger portion of the housework in high GEM countries.

The results of this study clearly demonstrate the importance of multi-level modeling in analyzing individual-level housework conflict. This study drew from a wide sample of countries to provide a range in levels of both gender egalitarianism and rates of female labor force participation. The results, however, are not without limitations. An initial limitation relates to the dependent measure of housework conflict. The conflict measure asks about the overall

housework conflict without differentiating who initiates this conflict. Thus, I cannot establish whether husband or wives are more likely to confront the other with a grievance but rather can discuss who is most likely to report housework conflict. There is, however, significant variation in the results for men and women indicating significant variation in reports of housework conflict for men and women. A second limitation relates to the GEM measure. A major concern with the gender empowerment measures used here is that most Western countries are not markedly different in terms of their societal gender equality. Although there is obvious clustering of certain nations by welfare regimes, the range of countries included in this study provide a wide variation in the GEM measure. Similarly, the rate of female labor force participation measure adds complexity to the multi-level modeling. A final limitation relates to the GEM index itself – indices mask important variation that may provide a better estimation of the level-2 effects. In other words, it may not be the climate of societal gender empowerment that reduces housework conflict but rather specific measures within this index may be driving these effects. This study has documented the significant relationship between this composite measure and housework conflict – future research should investigate the relationship between specific measures of this index and housework conflict. Ultimately, however, the results of this study demonstrate the importance of societal gender equality and female labor force participation on individual-reports of housework conflict and provide a framework for future multi-level modeling.

Table 2: Descriptive Overview of Dependent Variable and Macro-Level Measures

Country	N	Mean Conflict for Men (%)	Mean Conflict for Women (%)	GEM	% Female F-T Employment
Finland	1254	78.8	75.5	.820	56.9
Slovakia	794	58.9	62.3	.607	62.7
Norway	1161	67.7	68.0	.908	59.9
Iceland	361	77.5	66.9	.816	66.7
Poland	935	62.2	63.3	.606	57.1
Austria	1055	56.7	51.8	.770	44.1
Czech Republic	1469	66.1	62.9	.586	61.3
Germany	1658	60.8	61.3	.804	47.9
Luxemburg	946	47.3	48.1	.624*	38.2
Denmark	946	60.3	59.8	.847	61.8
Slovenia	806	55.8	56.3	.584	54.4
Sweden	1186	66.0	60.1	.854	62.7
Belgium	1084	58.2	55.7	.808	40.1
UK	982	52.3	48.1	.698	53.2
Spain	941	39.6	43.9	.716	38.1
Estonia	976	47.8	51.9	.592	60.4
Ukraine	978	50.6	52.6	.411	55.4
Netherlands	1114	57.0	51.6	.817	45.8
Switzerland	1157	52.8	51.6	.771	51.0
France	1104	35.0	45.1	.718**	49.1
Hungary	881	41.7	37.4	.529	48.6
Ireland	1256	36.8	34.7	.710	37.9
Portugal	1142	27.1	38.0	.644	51.6
Turkey	1094	18.5	19.5	.290	50.8
Greece	1472	23.7	27.0	.523	38.4

* Data for the GEM score for Luxemburg comes from the 1999 HDR

** Data for the GEM score for France comes from the 2007/2008 HDR

TABLE 4. POPULATION-AVERAGE LOG ODDS WITH ROBUST STANDARD ERRORS FOR HOUSEWORK CONFLICT FOR WOMEN AT LEVEL-1 (2004 ESS)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Level 1		Level 1		Level 1	
Intercept	0.541	***	0.615	***	0.413	***
Distributive Justice						
Outcomes						
R More Housework	0.195	*	---		0.268	**
R & SP Equal Housework	-0.040		---		-0.001	
Total Housework Hours	0.007		---		0.009	
Justifications						
Gender Egalitarianism	0.244	***	---		0.213	***
Relative Resources						
R Breadwinner	---		0.179	**	0.185	**
R & SP Equal Contributors	---		0.170	***	0.169	***
Household Income	---		0.067	***	0.058	***
Relative Work Hours	---		0.003	**	0.003	**
Relative Education Level	---		0.031		0.026	
Household Controls						
R Housework Decisionmaker	-0.572	***	-0.527	***	-0.552	***
R & SP Equal Decisionmaker	-0.866	***	-0.870	***	-0.870	***
Housework Stressful	0.173	***	0.172	***	0.174	***
Housework Monotonous	0.163	***	0.174	***	0.165	***
Individual Controls						
Separated/Divorced	-0.266	*	-0.250	*	-0.294	*
Widowed	-0.549	*	-0.593	*	-0.580	*
Never Married	0.324	**	0.303	**	0.289	**
Age	0.000		0.014		0.009	
Children under 6	0.033		0.057		0.047	
Children 6 to 17	0.066		0.083		0.078	

*p < 0.05 **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001

TABLE 5. POPULATION-AVERAGE LOG ODDS WITH ROBUST STANDARD ERRORS FOR HOUSEWORK CONFLICT FOR MEN AT LEVEL-1 (2004 ESS)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4
	Level 1		Level 1		Level 1		Level 1& 2
LEVEL-1 EFFECTS							
Intercept	0.315	*	0.162		0.231		0.249
Distributive Justice							
Outcomes							
R More Housework	-0.274	***	---		-0.284	***	-0.288 ***
R & SP Equal Housework	-0.134	*	---		-0.141	**	-0.146 **
Total Housework Hours	-0.016		---		0.003		0.003
Justifications							
Gender Egalitarianism	0.125	***	---		0.096	**	0.095 **
Relative Resources							
R Breadwinner	---		0.169	**	0.134	*	0.132 *
R & SP Equal Contributors	---		0.088		0.060		0.060
Household Income	---		0.055	**	0.050	***	0.044 ***
Relative Work Hours	---		-0.003	***	-0.003	***	-0.004 ***
Relative Education Level	---		0.014		0.013		0.015
Household Controls							
R Housework Decisionmaker	0.081		0.034		0.088		0.097
R & SP Equal Decisionmaker	-0.438	***	-0.469	***	-0.448	***	-0.455 ***
Housework Stress	0.160	***	0.150	***	0.161	***	0.160 ***
Housework Monotony	0.137	***	0.133	**	0.132	***	0.134 ***
Individual Controls							
Separated/Divorced	-0.135		-0.114		-0.113		-0.114
Widowed	-0.436		-0.474		-0.426		-0.396
Never Married	0.175		0.186		0.191		0.179
Age	-0.010		-0.016		-0.020		-0.023 *
Children under 6	0.174	*	0.187	**	0.189	*	0.176 *
Children 6 to 17	0.146	**	0.146	**	0.143	*	0.119 *
LEVEL-2 EFFECTS							
GEM							1.131
GEM x Children Under 6							1.184 ***
GEM x Children 6 to 17							1.158 ***

*p < 0.05 **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001

TABLE 6. POPULATION-AVERAGE LOG ODDS WITH ROBUST STANDARD ERRORS FOR HOUSEWORK CONFLICT FOR WOMEN AT LEVEL-2 (2004 ESS)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Level 1 & 2		Level 1 & 2		Level 1 & 2		Level 1 & 2	
Intercept	0.420	***	0.433	***	0.435	***	0.433	**
LEVEL-2 MEASURES								
Gender Egalitarianism Measure (GEM)	1.379		---		1.121		13.629	***
% Women Working Full-time	---		0.046	***	0.044	***	0.211	***
GEM x % Women Working Full-Time	---		---		---		-0.235	***
LEVEL-1 MEASURES								
Distributive Justice								
Outcomes								
R More Housework	0.267	**	0.273	**	0.273	**	0.277	**
R & SP Equal Housework	-0.005		-0.003		-0.006		-0.003	
Total Housework Hours	0.009		0.009	*	0.009	*	0.009	*
Justifications								
Gender Egalitarianism	0.213	***	0.221	***	0.219	***	0.223	***
Relative Resources								
R Breadwinner	0.186	**	0.187	**	0.189	**	0.192	**
R & SP Equal Contributors	0.174	***	0.172	**	0.176	**	0.178	**
Household Income	0.055	***	0.062	***	0.057	***	0.060	***
Relative Work Hours	0.003	**	0.003	***	0.003	***	0.003	***
Relative Education Level	0.027		0.027		0.027		0.028	
Household Controls								
R Housework Decisionmaker	-0.557	***	-0.571	***	-0.577	***	-0.576	***
R & SP Equal Decisionmaker	-0.878	***	-0.903	***	-0.910	***	-0.915	***
Housework Stressful	0.177	***	0.180	***	0.182	***	0.186	***
Housework Monotonous	0.167	***	0.171	***	0.172	***	0.173	***
Individual Controls								
Separated/Divorced	-0.301	*	-0.304	*	-0.307	*	-0.309	*
Widowed	-0.589	*	-0.575	*	-0.581	*	-0.590	*
Never Married	0.289	**	0.288	**	0.282	*	0.284	*
Age	0.009		0.009		0.009		0.008	
Children under 6	0.049		0.048		0.048		0.048	
Children 6 to 17	0.075		0.080		0.077		0.077	

*p < 0.05 **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001

TABLE 7: POPULATION-AVERAGE LOG ODDS WITH ROBUST STANDARD ERRORS FOR HOUSEWORK CONFLICT FOR MEN AT LEVEL-2 (ESS 2004)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Level 1 & 2		Level 1 & 2		Level 1 & 2		Level 1 & 2	
Intercept	0.232		0.239	*	0.236	*	0.236	*
LEVEL-2 MEASURES								
Gender Egalitarianism Measure (GEM)	1.658	*	---		1.435	*	10.907	**
% Women Working Full-time	---		0.041	***	0.038	***	0.164	***
GEM x % Women Working Full-Time	---		---		---		-0.178	**
LEVEL-1 MEASURES								
Distributive Justice								
Outcomes								
R More Housework	-0.286	***	-0.289	***	-0.291	***	-0.293	***
R & SP Equal Housework	-0.142	**	-0.142	**	-0.145	**	-0.145	**
Total Housework Hours	0.004		0.003		0.004		0.004	
Justifications								
Gender Egalitarianism	0.094	**	0.098	**	0.095	**	0.095	**
Relative Resources								
R Breadwinner	0.133	*	0.139	*	0.137	*	0.139	*
R & SP Equal Contributors	0.062		0.063		0.063		0.064	
Total Household Income	0.046	***	0.053	***	0.048	***	0.050	***
Relative Work Hours	-0.004	***	-0.004	***	-0.004	***	-0.004	***
Relative Education Level	0.014		0.014		0.015		0.015	
Household Controls								
R Housework Decisionmaker	0.091		0.087		0.094		0.094	
R & SP Equal Decisionmaker	-0.454	***	-0.460	***	-0.464	***	-0.468	***
Housework Stressful	0.163	***	0.165	***	0.167	***	0.168	***
Housework Monotonous	0.132	***	0.135	***	0.135	***	0.135	***
Individual Controls								
Separated/Divorced	-0.121		-0.118		-0.125		-0.126	
Widowed	-0.433		-0.426		-0.425		-0.435	
Never Married	0.187		0.187		0.178		0.180	
Age	-0.020		-0.020		-0.021		-0.021	
Children under 6	0.199	*	0.205	*	0.201	*	0.203	*
Children 6 to 17	0.143	*	0.143	*	0.144	*	0.146	*

*p < 0.05 **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001

Figure 1: Effect of Children on Housework Conflict by GEM score for Men

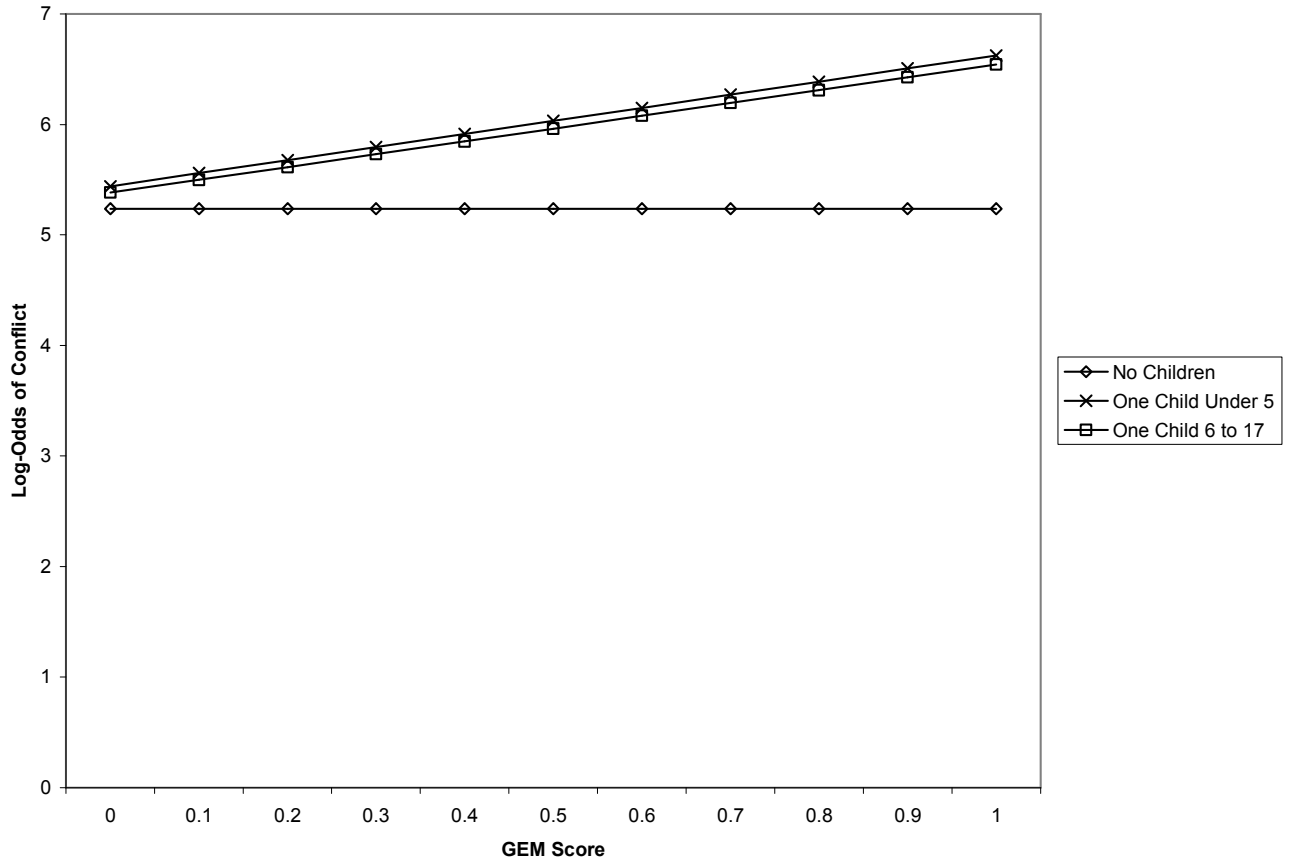


Figure 2: Housework Conflict for Women by GEM and Female Labor Force Participation

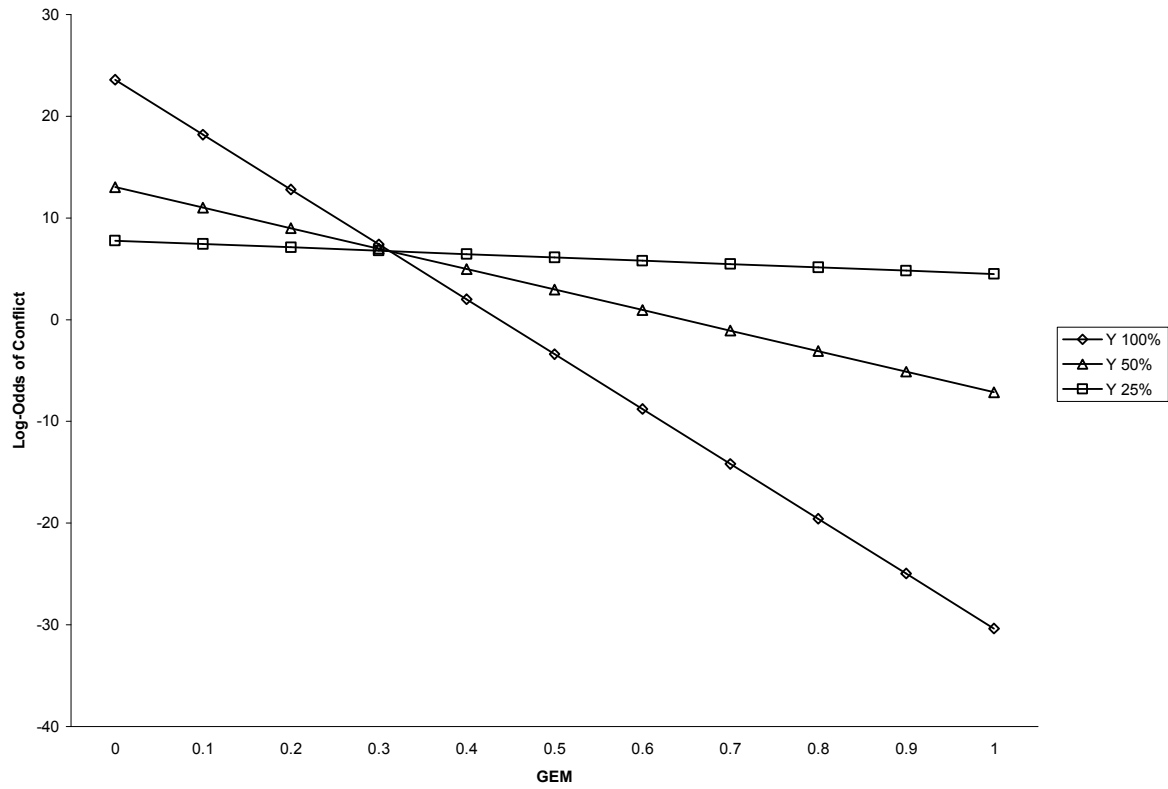
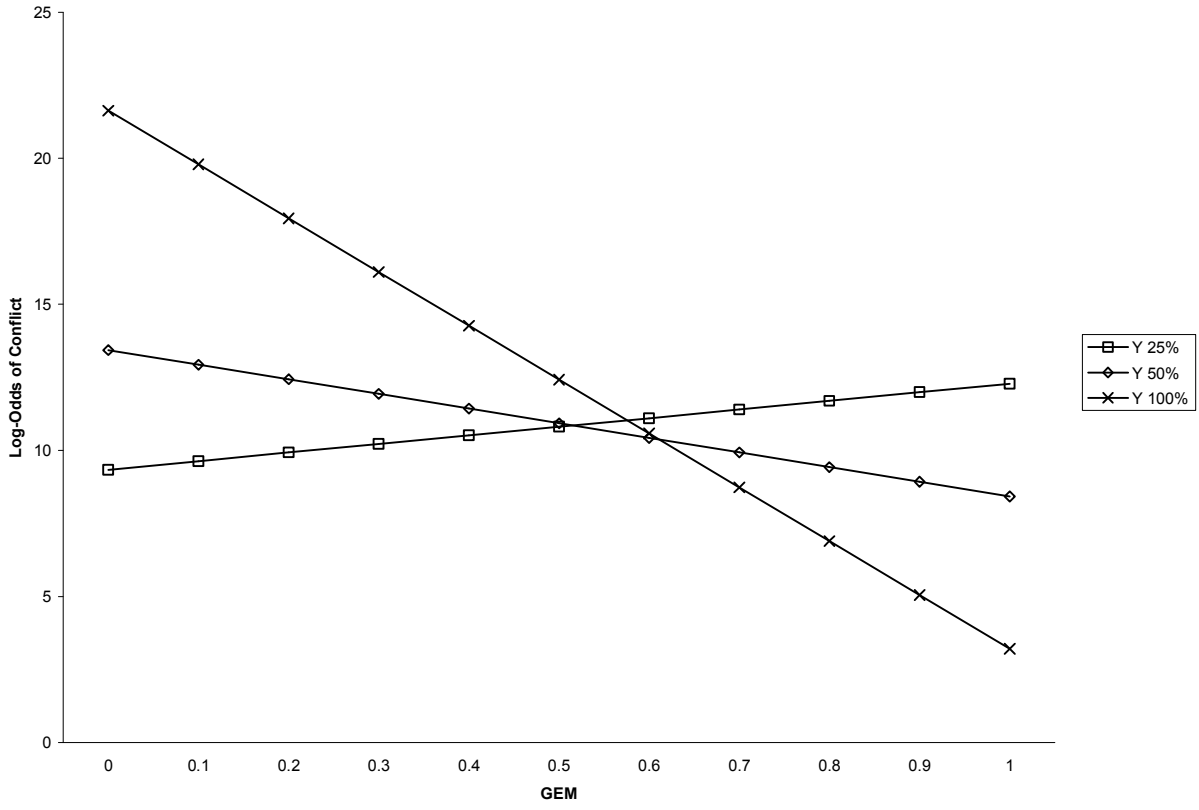


Figure 3: Housework Conflict for Men by GEM and Rates of Female Labor Force Participation



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ⁱ The European Social Survey data used in this study does not ask about between- and within-gender comparisons and thus I cannot test the *comparisons* component of the theory.

ⁱⁱ Don't know responses accounted for 4.1% of the total 4.4% of those missing on weekly hours and 4.1% of the total 4.2% of those missing on weekend housework hours. Similarly, those who were missing on one were likely to be missing on both ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that most of the missing data accurately measures those unable to estimate housework hours and should be deleted from the analysis.

ⁱⁱⁱ Respondents who reported that they don't know what percentage of housework they performed were also likely to report that they don't know on their spouse's percentage ($p < 0.001$). Again, this supports the argument that these are valid responses and the respondents should be excluded from the sample.

^{iv} Respondents were asked for their annual income in Euros. However, this measure is missing a lot of data (close to 50% of the respondents are missing, refused or don't know). This measure was not used in the analysis. Thus, this study controls for the total family income.

^v A total of 12 respondents reported more than 120 hours per week and were deleted from the sample. Thus, the possible values range from -120 to 120 hours.

^{vi} The models include measures from the final level-1 model. The analyses were run with the level-2 interaction effects for men with children by GEM score but the main level-2 results were equivalent – thus, for simplicity, the results present models without level-2 interaction effects for children.