

Outsourcing of Domestic Tasks: A Matter of Preferences?

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Tanja van der Lippe¹, Vincenz Frey¹,
and Milena Tsvetkova²

Abstract

The outsourcing of domestic tasks is an important strategy for coping with the competing time claims of the family and the workplace. Previous research explained the use of domestic help mainly in terms of financial and time constraints. In this article, we conceptualize household work as producing not only goods but also direct utility, and we argue that the more pleasure household members take in doing domestic work, the less they outsource it. Using the Dutch Time Competition Survey ($N = 736$), we find that if partners enjoy maintenance, cleaning, cooking, or child care, they are less likely to outsource these tasks, controlling for time and monetary resources and gender-role expectations. A woman's preferences are more important for the outsourcing of cleaning and child care, whereas a man's preferences are more important for the outsourcing of home maintenance. Cooking is less likely to be outsourced when both men and women find it pleasurable to cook themselves.

Keywords

household labor, household economy, pleasure, gender, outsourcing

¹Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands

²Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA

Corresponding Author:

Tanja van der Lippe, Department of Sociology, Utrecht University, PO Box 80140, 3508 TC Utrecht, Netherlands.

Email: t.vanderlippe@uu.nl

Introduction

The number of dual-earner couples has increased dramatically in the past few decades. Since such couples have less time to meet the demands of the family (Bianchi, Nukjue, Sayer, & Source, 2000; Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006; Van der Lippe, 2007), they have a strong incentive to find new ways of organizing housework. One important strategy for coping with the conflicting time claims of the family and the workplace is to use goods and services purchased on the market as substitutes for unpaid domestic work. This behavior, referred to as domestic outsourcing, can take various forms, from ready-made meals, babysitting, and child-care facilities to housecleaning and maintenance services. As the outsourcing of household work has become more prevalent in Western societies, researchers have become increasingly interested in which households make use of what outsourcing alternatives (Baxter, Hewitt, & Western, 2009; Bittman, Matheson, & Meagher, 1999; De Ruijter, 2005; Oropesa, 1993).

Most studies of domestic outsourcing focus on the constraints couples face when deciding on outsourcing options. Households with fewer financial resources will have less money available to cover the costs of paid domestic help and are therefore less likely to use domestic services than households with greater financial resources (Oropesa, 1993; Spitze, 1999). In addition, dual-career couples face more time constraints because of lengthy paid-work weeks, and they are therefore compelled to purchase more domestic help (Van der Lippe, Tjinders, & De Ruijter, 2004). Empirical results show strong support for the influence of financial resources on domestic outsourcing and some support for the influence of time constraints (De Ruijter, 2005; De Ruijter & Van der Lippe, 2007; Oropesa, 1993).

The underlying assumption of constraints-based explanations is that spending time on household work is not directly useful and hence can easily be replaced by a market good or service bought with labor-market earnings (Becker, 1991). We claim, however, that domestic tasks may have recreational value (Collins, 2007), and we suggest that partners outsource less if they take more pleasure in domestic labor, and that if they outsource at all, they outsource what they find least pleasurable. At the same time, however, in many instances, people's ability to act on their preferences depends on the constraints they face. This may also be the case with respect to domestic outsourcing; for example, partners working longer hours might not be able to take care of their children themselves even if they enjoy doing so.

We further argue that we can enhance our understanding of the gendered meaning of household labor and outsourcing by focusing on men's and

women's pleasure in performing household labor (Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009), which we refer to below as task-related preferences. If domestic work does indeed have gendered meaning, and men and women produce gender in their division of work, we would expect women to have stronger preferences for many of the household tasks than men. Since people are likely to act on their preferences, we reason that the importance of men's and women's preferences for certain tasks and their preferences toward outsourcing will differ.

This contribution therefore addresses three related research questions: (a) To what extent are task-related preferences associated with outsourcing over and above the standard explanations? (b) Does this differ between men and women along female- and male-typed tasks? (c) To what extent does the influence of preferences depend on the constraints households face? Note that our research questions are not framed in causal terms; our cross-sectional design does not allow us to assess the causal influences of preferences on outsourcing behavior. For a causal interpretation of cross-sectional associations between task-related preferences and outsourcing, one would need to assume preferences to be a stable personal characteristic, strictly not affected by whether a person performs a certain task or has somebody else doing it.

We are the first to investigate the role of task-related preferences in domestic outsourcing but not the first to account for preferences in a broader sense. A few studies of domestic outsourcing focus on gender ideology (Oropesa, 1993). The idea is that since domestic outsourcing challenges traditional gender-role expectations that women should perform the domestic duties, domestic outsourcing is less likely in households with high levels of support for the traditional view of the family. One other study focuses on general preferences about whether domestic work should be outsourced (Baxter et al., 2009). There is not much empirical support for the relation between gender-role expectations and the use of paid domestic labor (Baxter et al., 2009; Oropesa, 1993) but somewhat more support for the relation between views on employing domestic work and the outsourcing decision (Baxter et al., 2009). Compared with gender-role expectations, task-related preferences have the advantage of being specifically related to certain domestic tasks. Moreover, task-related preferences can be viewed as even more exogenous in relation to domestic outsourcing than general preferences toward outsourcing. Since the concept of task-related preferences is rather new, a drawback is that its measurement is less established.

By explicitly considering individual preferences, we contribute to the literature in the following four ways. First, by accounting for preferences, we make an important theoretical contribution to the sociology of the household.

Previous attempts to overcome the limits of the economic approach in explaining the division of household labor have been based, most notably, on gender theories (Shelton & John, 1996). In addition to the application of gender ideology at a more abstract level (see Baxter et al., 2009), we introduce stable individual preferences specific to particular domestic tasks. So far, researchers have applied preferences in terms of pleasure to time spent on domestic tasks (Ferree, 1991) but not to the outsourcing of tasks. By doing so, we extend the theoretical reasoning on preferences in addition to constraints in explaining how the household is organized.

Second, by investigating how the pleasure derived from doing a domestic task affects the decision to outsource it, we contribute to our understanding of the outsourcing of household labor. The pleasure that partners associate with doing certain tasks has been shown to affect the way they divide these tasks between themselves (Van Berkel, 1997). However, it is not known whether preferences toward household work affect the partners' decision to employ outside help with it. We attempt to fill this gap by studying how preferences differ between tasks and how they relate to the decision of whether to outsource a specific task.

Third, although our focus is on the effects of preferences, our analysis controls for time constraints (e.g., hours of employment, presence of children, and volume of housework), financial resources (e.g., income), gender ideology, as well as sociodemographic correlates of outsourcing (see De Ruijter, 2005; Treas & De Ruijter, 2008). In this way, we contribute to the research on domestic outsourcing by providing another test of the prevalent constraint-based explanations. Although it has been convincingly shown that financial resources increase outsourcing (Bittman et al., 1999; Cohen, 1998; Oropesa, 1993), findings on the effect of time constraints and gender ideology are less consistent (Baxter et al., 2009; De Ruijter, 2005).

Fourth, since we have data available on both spouses, we are able to include both sets of preferences. Studies focusing on gender-role ideology or general preferences toward outsourcing mostly rely on data on only one person in the household (Oropesa, 1993; Baxter et al., 2009). In contrast, we are able to study the relative importance of female and male preferences.

Our study was carried out in the Netherlands, where there has been an increase in domestic (domestic help, restaurant visits) and child-care outsourcing (De Ruijter, 2005). Since the increase in female employment participation has not led to a substantial decrease in the employment participation of their male partners, the demand for outsourcing in the Netherlands is high (Cancedda, 2001). The Dutch service sector is expanding and average household spending on household services has increased by 50% over the past two

decades (CBS Statistics Netherlands, 2010a). Official figures show that the supply and demand of formal child-care facilities, which are partly subsidized by the Dutch government, have also increased greatly over the last years. Of all families, 27% made use of formal child care in 2009 (CBS Statistics Netherlands, 2010b), and many families will receive informal support, too (e.g., via grandparents). In contrast to child care, there are no official statistics that document the outsourcing of maintenance work, cleaning, or cooking. The Dutch outsource maintenance work partly to official companies and partly to handymen, and they receive domestic help, in particular, help with cleaning, most often from individual women working in the shadow economy. Thus, in the Netherlands, the level of outsourcing is high, but outsourcing also often takes place in markets that are, if at all, only loosely regulated.

Housework Preferences

When domestic outsourcing is studied within an economic framework such as the New Home Economics, the household is viewed upon as a “production unit” (see, e.g., Becker, 1991). The partners input time and market-purchased goods to produce commodities, such as a warm meal together, a cozy home, children, love, etc. These commodities yield utility for the partners. Constrained by limited time and financial resources, the household members maximize their common welfare by allocating their time between home and income production. Deciding whether a domestic task should be performed by one of the partners or replaced by a substitute purchased on the market is part of the time allocation consideration. Focusing exclusively on constraints, the vast majority of studies on domestic outsourcing more or less implicitly assume household labor to be something one rather dislikes (notable exceptions are Baxter et al., 2009; De Ruijter, Treas, & Cohen, 2005; Oropesa, 1993). This assumption is based on two underlying ideas: first, preferences are fixed, and second, working at home does not yield direct utility. It thus follows that household members are indifferent as to whether commodities are produced by inputting “goods” made at home or purchasing such goods on the market with earnings. Since market-purchased goods and services are perfect substitutes for time input into household work, the outsourcing decision is made solely on the basis of relative prices (money for market goods and foregone earnings for housework time).

It is our claim that challenging this major assumption about household work leads to new predictions about domestic outsourcing. Household work can be perceived as a direct source of utility in two ways: as a source of

pleasure and via the production of gender. First, we might find certain household tasks pleasurable if, while doing them, we relax, express our creative needs, or stimulate our intellect. Although we would rather have somebody else do our work, this is not so for activities that we perceive as pleasurable: if we like to cook, we cannot enjoy cooking through someone else. If a person takes pleasure in preparing food as well as eating it afterward, the time devoted to cooking can then be considered rewarding as well. Empirical analyses suggest that of all housework tasks, child care and cooking are the two most preferred (Shaw, 1988), and that time spent on housework indeed increases life satisfaction to a certain extent (McCullough & Zick, 1992). Second, literature specific to the division of labor echoes these ideas, with men and women expected to “produce” their gender identities by performing certain domestic tasks (Coltrane, 2000). Within the doing gender literature, it is argued that preferences are reinforced by behavior because taking on more of the domestic work will reinforce what are already more favorable preferences toward such work (Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009). If men and women have thus more favorable preferences toward certain housework tasks, doing these tasks themselves gives direct utility and will lead to less outsourcing.

Because of the pleasure derived from doing certain domestic tasks and the doing gender aspect, direct time input into domestic production is only partially replaceable with goods and services purchased on the market. When someone substitutes domestic production with market-purchased goods or services, he or she loses its rewarding value. It follows that the attractiveness of outsourcing a certain domestic task decreases as the direct utility that one derives from performing the task oneself increases. We therefore hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 1: The more pleasure the members of a household take in performing a domestic task, the less likely they are to outsource this task.

We do not expect that task-related preferences are equally important for each task because the outsourcing of the different tasks entails different concerns. For example, cleaning and maintenance require the service supplier to physically enter the home, sometimes even when there are no household members present, whereas eating out does not involve invading the privacy of the household. Furthermore, outsourcing child care means that some third party takes over a task of special value to the household: the education and

well-being of the children. Although trust is a very important issue for parents when “hiring someone for this labor of love” (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001, p. 68; see also De Ruijter, 2005), it will be less important if the only consequence is a tasteless meal. Finally, in contrast to other domestic tasks, home maintenance tasks may require specific tools that some households may not have access to.

Another source of differences between the tasks resides in the gender-typing of household labor (Blair & Lichter, 1991; De Ruijter & Van der Lippe, 2007; Presser, 1994). Routine domestic chores, such as laundry and cleaning, more often fall to women. On the other hand, occasional tasks, such as maintenance, are usually seen as men’s responsibility (Hochschild, 1989). Between 1965 and 1995, women dominated in female-typed tasks, and men increased the amount of time spent on male-oriented tasks. The belief that housework and child care are women’s rather than men’s work and that household maintenance is a typical male task is likely to have become part of men’s and women’s gender identities in this period. Given these gendered beliefs, women probably have more positive preferences toward housework such as cooking and cleaning, and men toward home maintenance. Moreover, doing these tasks will produce gender and lead to a reinforcing process (Ferree, 1991). Note, however, that differences might exist as well among the more female-typed tasks of child care, cooking, and cleaning, which makes it more or less easy to do gender. Cleaning is the task with most discretion in when it must be completed (more than cooking and child care), making it more manageable for women to perform cleaning tasks even if they are highly restricted (De Ruijter, 2005).

Although there are no empirical studies showing that gender differences exist, there is some evidence that women enjoy household labor more than men. Some studies have indeed found that women enjoy housework (Sullivan, 1996; Van Berkel & De Graaf, 1999) and child care (Grote, Naylor, & Clark, 2002; Kroska, 2003) more than men; however, others found no gender differences or even that men enjoy housework (Ferree, 1991; Grote et al., 2002; Kroska, 2003; Spitze & Loscocco, 2000) and child care (Sullivan, 1996) more than women. How do these gender-specific preferences relate to outsourcing? According to Poortman and Van der Lippe (2009), to the extent that attitudes toward household labor reflect gender identities, favorable attitudes will be associated with more time spent on household labor. In the same vein, we expect that the pleasure a woman takes in typically female tasks and the pleasure a man takes in typically male tasks will lead to less outsourcing in those specific tasks. Our hypothesis is thus:

Hypothesis 2a: The more pleasure a woman takes in female-typed tasks (child care, cleaning, and cooking), the less likely that these tasks will be outsourced, with her pleasure being more important than the pleasure the husband takes in doing the same tasks.

Hypothesis 2b: The more pleasure a man takes in male-typed tasks (home maintenance), the less likely that these tasks will be outsourced, with his pleasure being more important than the pleasure the wife takes in doing the same tasks.

Preferences Subject to Constraints

The effect of the partners' task-related preferences on their outsourcing behavior might differ according to the socioeconomic situation of the household. More specifically, the degree to which couples consider their pleasure from doing a household task when deciding whether to outsource the task might depend on the financial and time constraints they face.

Intuitively, the fewer the financial constraints, the more enabled individuals are to act on their preferences. Given all the options available to them, household members are more likely to outsource the household tasks they enjoy least. For example, if a person earns enough to employ someone to do household work and likes cooking more than cleaning, he or she will then choose to outsource the cleaning. However, a less wealthy person would not be able to outsource any task, and the pleasure he or she takes in cooking or cleaning will not matter. Empirical results confirm that households with more financial resources are more likely to outsource at least some domestic work (Bellante & Foster, 1984; Zick & McCullough, 1996). We therefore expect that:

Hypothesis 3: The greater the financial resources in a household, the bigger the effect of task-related preferences on the outsourcing decision.

With respect to time availability, two opposing expectations can be formulated. On the one hand, time and financial constraints affect outsourcing in opposite directions. The less time people have available for domestic work or the more time-consuming their household is, the more likely they are to outsource. We therefore also expect the aforementioned mechanism to work in the opposite direction:

Hypothesis 4a: The less time available or the more time needed, the bigger the effect of task-related preferences on the outsourcing decision.

On the other hand, time constraints may dictate what tasks need to be outsourced. Certain tasks, such as cooking and child care, have to be performed at specific times and must therefore be outsourced if neither of the partners is available. What the partners choose to outsource, then, depends not on their tastes but rather on their work schedules. This logic leads us to a contradictory prediction about the importance of preferences for the outsourcing decision owing to partners' time constraints:

Hypothesis 4b: The less time available, the smaller the effect of task-related preferences on the outsourcing decision.

Data and Method

We used data from the Time Competition Survey (Van der Lippe & Glebbeek, 2004), conducted in 2004 and focusing on organizations, employees, and their partners. Thirty organizations participated in the survey after prior selection, and their employees were then sampled in a two-step contact procedure. First, the employees were called at work. If they agreed to participate, they were asked for their home address (privacy regulations meant that the organizations were not allowed to provide home addresses). Of the 3,970 employees contacted, 39% agreed to participate. These employees were then contacted at home to make an appointment for an interview. Employees in couple households had to ask their partner to participate as well. Of the employees contacted at home, 28% were not interviewed in the end, usually because the partner had refused to cooperate. The overall response rate was 29%, a reasonable score in view of Dutch response rates, which vary between 25% and 45% (De Leeuw & De Heer, 2001) and the two-step contact procedure. Analyses showed that households unwilling to cooperate hardly differed on background characteristics (i.e., gender, education, employment hours, and family status) from those that did participate. We therefore believe that our results are not seriously biased by selective nonresponse. Of the 1,114 employees who eventually participated, we selected the 831 employees with a cohabiting or marital partner. We excluded same-sex couples because there were too few for comparison purposes ($n = 28$; 3%). We also excluded any respondents with missing information on our main dependent and independent variables. Of all couples, only 5 (<1%) had missing values on the dependent variables referring to the outsourcing of maintenance chores, cleaning and cooking, and another 48 couples (6%) had missing data on the pleasure that the partners find in performing these tasks themselves. Of couples with children not older than 12 years ($n = 407$), 23

couples (6%) had missing values for child-care outsourcing, and 30 couples (7%) had missing values for child-care preferences. Our sample eventually consisted of 736 couples, of which 349 had children not older than 12 years. Details about our measures are presented below. Descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1.

Measures

Outsourcing. The dependent variable in our analysis is the outsourcing of several different household tasks: (a) home maintenance, (b) cleaning, (c) cooking, and (d) child care for children younger than 13 years. For home maintenance, the male partner was asked whether the household had received help from home maintenance suppliers (handymen and firms) in the past 12 months, and, if so, how many days or hours. To measure the outsourcing of cleaning, the female partner was asked whether the household receives help with cleaning from a housecleaner or housecleaning company, and, if so, how many hours on average per week or month. Female partners were also asked whether the household receives help with child care from babysitters, day-care centers, after-school care, or host parents, and, if so, how many hours or days on average per month. Additionally, the female partner was asked questions about the household's average number of purchases of take-out or ready-to-eat food and restaurant visits per month. Since we aimed to understand the importance of preferences in addition to financial resources, we concentrated only on paid outsourcing. Because our outsourcing measures for cleaning, home maintenance and child care were extremely skewed, the dependent variables for these three tasks simply measured whether a household outsources a task (1) or not (0). Almost all households outsourced cooking to some extent; for this reason, the monthly frequency was used.

Task-related preferences. We used the respondents' answers to the following question: Can you indicate for the following household tasks whether you generally find it pleasurable to do them yourself? Respondents were then asked to mark their answer on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*very pleasurable*) to 5 (*not at all pleasurable*) for cleaning, cooking, chores in and around the house, and child care. We reverse-coded the rankings to have a higher score indicating more pleasure from doing a task.

Constraints. We measured financial constraints by taking the combined net income of the partners in thousands of euros per month. This measurement corresponds to the assumption that labor-market participation is exogenous (Zick & McCullough, 1996), which is necessary for testing the hypotheses on time availability.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of All Variables Used in the Analyses (N = 736).

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Outsourcing of home maintenance (0/1)	0.572	—
Outsourcing of cleaning (0/1)	0.304	—
Outsourcing of cooking	5.356	4.109
Outsourcing of child care (0/1) ^a	0.585	—
Male task pleasure for home maintenance	3.632	1.061
Female task pleasure for home maintenance	2.567	0.993
Male task pleasure for cleaning	2.422	0.989
Female task pleasure for cleaning	2.566	1.007
Male task pleasure for cooking	3.481	1.122
Female task pleasure for cooking	3.645	0.959
Male task pleasure for child care	3.026	0.733
Female task pleasure for child care	4.389	0.684
Paid work hours (man)	39.951	10.333
Paid work hours (woman)	26.127	12.809
Household income	3.576	2.312
Number of children <4 years	0.292	0.572
Number of children 4-12 years	0.587	0.878
Number of children 13-18 years	0.244	0.580
Number of rooms	4.861	1.294
Home owners	0.823	—
Man's gender ideology	3.867	0.676
Woman's gender ideology	4.095	0.625
Age	40.846	8.259
Highest educational level	8.531	1.864

a. Only for couples with children younger than 13 years (N = 349).

Time constraints consisted of time availability and time demands (Bittman et al., 1999; Cohen, 1998; Shelton & John, 1996). To measure time availability, we used a continuous variable indicating the actual hours of paid work for each of the partners individually. To measure time demands, we included the following variables. Two variables indicated the number of children younger than 4 years of age and the number of children between 4 and 12 years, respectively. Although children in the household older than this are likely to contribute to household tasks and thus counterbalance the need for outsourcing, earlier research reports effects also for the presence of older children (De Ruijter, 2005). We therefore included the number of children between

12 and 18 years as well. Finally, we included an interval variable for the total number of rooms in the dwelling and a dummy variable for whether the home is privately owned.

Controls. We controlled for the partners' age, education, and gender ideology. We included the mean age of the partners in the household and the highest level of education of the partners, ranging from 1 (*did not complete primary school*) to 11 (*postgraduate*). Gender ideology was measured by four items: "A woman is more fit to raise little children than a man," "I think it is normal for a girl to attend technical school," "It is most natural for the man to be the breadwinner and the woman to take care of the household and the children," and "It is not natural for women to supervise men in a company." Response categories ranged from 1 (*fully agree*) to 5 (*fully disagree*). Values were first recoded so that high scores represented egalitarian attitudes; they were then averaged. The resulting scales had moderate reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .64$ for women and $.67$ for men). Dutch research using almost the same items produced similar alphas (Kalmijn, 1999). These moderate alphas may result from the small number of items, because the larger the number of items, the higher the Cronbach's alpha (Carmines & Zeller, 1979).

Method

To test the effects of constraints and preferences on domestic outsourcing, we estimated separate models for each task. We did this for three reasons. First, our hypotheses concern the influence of task-related preferences on the outsourcing of the particular task. Second, the scale-level and the distributions differ between the dependent variables. Finally, the meaning of outsourcing differs between household tasks, making it better to examine each task separately.

To explain the use of outside help with house maintenance, cleaning, and child care, we applied logistic regression. We chose a binary regression model because of the large percentage of households that do not outsource these tasks: 69% for cleaning, 42% for child care, and 43% for home maintenance tasks. In comparison, about 89% of the households in our sample outsource cooking. For cooking, we therefore used ordinary least squares for monthly outsourcing frequency.

Since we are interested in the effect of preferences as well as the effect of standard explanations on outsourcing, we executed our analyses for each specific domestic task in a stepwise manner. We started with a baseline Model 0, which is not reported in a table. This model included only variables pertaining to standard explanations and control variables, and it was used to

assess the change of fit when adding task pleasure. The results of the Chi-square tests for the logistic regressions and the *F*-change for the ordinary least squares regression showed whether adding preferences improved the model fit. We then added the indicators of task pleasure for each partner in Model 1 to test our new hypotheses concerning the effect of preferences (Hypotheses 1 and 2). In the final Model 2, we added the interactions, that is, task pleasure and income (Hypothesis 3) and task pleasure and work hours (Hypothesis 4). Both men's and women's task pleasure and work hours are thereby taken into account.

Results

Descriptive Results

Table 2 presents domestic outsourcing by task-related preferences. For house maintenance, cleaning, and child care, the table shows the percentage of households that outsourced the respective task, given the level of pleasure the man and the woman find in the task; for cooking, we report the average monthly outsourcing frequency. The table also contains the number of men or women who indicated the particular pleasure level for each household task.

Comparing outsourcing by task pleasure, we see a correspondence between taking greater pleasure in a task and being less likely to outsource that task. Regarding maintenance chores, the figures are slightly more consistent for men than for women. A woman's enjoyment of cleaning meant she was less likely to use external help for cleaning; compared with women who disliked cleaning, women who were on the positive side of indifference were between two and three times less likely to outsource cleaning. Outsourcing of cleaning was also related to the man's preferences, with a similar pattern emerging. A woman's enjoyment of cooking meant she was less likely to use external substitutes for home-prepared meals. The man's enjoyment, however, did not appear to matter at all. Finally, no clear pattern emerged in outsourcing child care. This might be partly due to the highly skewed distribution of the parents' attitudes toward child care—very few fathers and, especially, mothers said that they did not enjoy taking care of and spending time with their children. Nevertheless, there was a correspondence between the outsourcing of child care and the pleasure the woman took in taking care of the children herself. In line with our expectations and as with the other tasks, the relationship between outsourcing and task pleasure was less obvious for the gender that does not traditionally perform the task.

Table 2. Outsourcing by Task-Related Preferences.

	Male tasks		Female tasks					
	Maintenance		Cleaning		Cooking		Child care	
	N ^a	Percentage ^b	N	Percentage	N	tms/mo ^c	N	Percentage
Total		57.20		30.40		5.36		58.59
Task pleasure for woman								
1 (low)	60	56.67	137	53.28	20	6.40	1	0
2	159	55.35	181	34.81	58	5.22	2	100
3	287	61.67	291	23.02	221	5.36	28	60.71
4	198	54.55	118	16.10	301	5.50	147	65.99
5 (high)	32	43.75	9	22.22	136	4.92	171	51.46
Significance test (p value)	$\chi^2(4) = 5.509 (.239)$		$\chi^2(4) = 54.704 (.010)$		$F(4, 740) = 2.05 (.086)$		$\chi^2(4) = 9.764 (.045)$	
Task pleasure for man								
1 (low)	36	75.00	150	35.33	53	5.15	1	0
2	68	67.65	232	36.64	81	5.33	6	83.33
3	179	52.51	260	24.62	192	5.51	65	55.38
4	301	56.15	81	25.93	279	5.42	188	56.38
5 (high)	152	55.92	13	7.69	131	5.09	89	64.04
Significance test (p value)	$\chi^2(4) = 9.534 (.049)$		$\chi^2(4) = 14.029 (.007)$		$F(4, 740) = 0.23 (.924)$		$\chi^2(4) = 4.660 (.323)$	

a. Number of individuals who find the specified level of pleasure in doing the task.

b. The percentage of individuals who outsource the task.

c. Average number of times per month individuals outsource meals.

Preferences and Outsourcing of Home Maintenance

Table 3 shows the relationship between preferences and outsourcing of home maintenance, cleaning, cooking, and child care, respectively. We start by discussing the standard explanations. With respect to maintenance work, Model 1 showed no consistent support for the standard explanations for the outsourcing decision. We found neither household income nor partners' labor market participation to be significantly related to the outsourcing of maintenance work. Only home ownership and number of rooms increased the likelihood of outsourcing: homeowners were more likely to hire professional help (at least once a year) to get a maintenance chore done.

Preferences for household tasks were found to contribute significantly to explaining outsourcing of home maintenance over and above the standard explanations. The model statistics in Table 3 show that when preferences were added to the baseline model, the model fit did improve significantly. In accordance with our expectations, whether a couple outsourced maintenance work depended more on the male's than the female's perception of how pleasurable it is to perform such tasks. However, neither the effect of the female's preferences nor the gender difference between the effects was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1) = 2.02$, p one-sided = .155. There was one significant interaction between preferences and constraints: in line with our hypothesis, the relationship between the likelihood of outsourcing and the man's preference for home maintenance became more negative when the household was wealthier. This effect could also result from the fact that home maintenance tasks may require very specific tools that some households may not have access to, regardless of preferences. In wealthy households, men enjoying maintenance work can buy these tools, even if outsourcing would be more economical.

Preferences and Outsourcing of Cleaning

The standard explanation for outsourcing household tasks offered a good model fit for cleaning as Table 3 shows. The analysis provided substantial support for the standard explanation of time constraints: the likelihood of cleaning work being outsourced was related significantly positively to the number of hours that each partner spent in the labor market and to the number of young children in the household, as well as to home ownership.

Adding the pleasure men and women take in cleaning themselves helped significantly to explain the outsourcing of cleaning, as the model fit shows. Our results also provided convincing support for the hypotheses concerning

Table 3. Results From Logistic Regression Analyses of the Outsourcing of Maintenance, Cleaning, and Child Care, and From Ordinary Least Squares Regression Analyses of the Outsourcing of Cooking.

	Maintenance ^a		Cleaning ^a		Cooking ^a		Child care ^b	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
	Paid work hours (man)	0.005	-0.001	0.028**	0.026**	0.000	0.003	0.053**
Paid work hours (woman)	-0.009	-0.010	0.045***	0.039***	0.034**	0.036**	0.053***	0.057***
Household income	-0.006	0.077	-0.014	0.048	0.125*	0.176**	-0.075	-0.051
Number of children <4 years	0.159	0.145	0.420*	0.409*	-0.553*	-0.496*	3.277***	3.299***
Number of children 4-12 years	-0.116	-0.103	0.335**	0.342**	-0.529**	-0.474**	-0.049	-0.033
Number of children 13-18 years	0.101	0.101	0.162	0.159	-0.515*	-0.498*	-1.039***	-1.000**
Number of rooms	0.156*	0.143*	0.103	0.064	-0.246*	-0.275*	0.214	0.191
Home owners	1.660***	1.666***	1.015***	1.061***	0.066	-0.010	0.097	0.036
Male task pleasure	-0.264***	-0.268***	-0.153	-0.147	-0.243*	-0.304*	-0.155	-0.092
Female task pleasure	-0.086	-0.081	-0.405***	-0.386***	-0.308*	-0.319*	-0.483*	-0.575**
Age	0.037**	0.036**	0.053***	0.058***	-0.130***	-0.127***	0.103**	0.107**
Highest educational level	0.297***	0.284***	0.511***	0.502***	-0.032	-0.024	0.101	0.105
Man's gender ideology	0.225*	0.236*	0.150	0.172	0.091	0.005	0.664**	0.703**
Woman's gender ideology	-0.172	-0.220	0.045	0.064	0.135	0.204	-0.063	-0.103
Task pleasure (man) x work hours (man)		0.011		-0.017		-0.020		0.007
Task pleasure (man) x work hours (woman)		0.003		-0.009		-0.008		0.012

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

	Maintenance ^a		Cleaning ^a		Cooking ^a		Child care ^b	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Task pleasure (man) x household income		-0.120*		0.215**		-0.164***		0.023
Task pleasure (woman) x work hours (man)		-0.011		0.007		-0.021*		-0.021
Task pleasure (woman) x work hours (woman)		0.004		-0.008		-0.025*		0.029
Task pleasure (woman) x household income		-0.042		-0.170**		0.167*		-0.103
Constant	-4.762***	-4.416***	-11.063***	-11.252***	12.392***	12.363***	-9.429***	-9.287***
Nagelkerke R ²	.160	.170	.240	.253	.154	.176	.396	.404
Test Model 0 ^c - Model 1:	11.86**		20.45**		7.04*		5.26	
LR $\chi^2(2)/F$ -change ^d								
Test Model 1 - Model 2:		10.28		12.59*		22.79**		4.95
LR $\chi^2(6)/F$ -change								

a. N = 736

b. N = 349

c. Baseline models with constraint and control variables only (not reported, available from the authors).

d. χ^2 for home maintenance, cleaning, and child care, F-change for cooking.* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (one-sided tests except for age, the interaction of work hours, and preferences, and the constant and the likelihood ratio tests).

the effect of preferences on outsourcing. The more the wife took pleasure in cleaning, the less likely she was to outsource it. The effect of women's preferences was significantly stronger than the (nonsignificant) effect of men's preferences, $\chi^2(1) = 3.24$, p one-sided = .07). The effect of preferences was related to household income for both men and women. For women, in line with our hypothesis, the negative effect of a woman's task pleasure on outsourcing became stronger when the household income was higher. For men, the reverse effect can be seen: The wealthier the household, the less the outsourcing decision reflected how pleasurable the man found cleaning. In addition, neither the woman's nor the man's participation in paid labor affected the importance of preferences in the outsourcing decision.

Preferences and Outsourcing of Cooking

The standard explanations received some support in the model related to the outsourcing of cooking. The more hours women worked, the more likely they were to outsource cooking, although having children decreased that likelihood. Adding preferences to the model significantly improved the explanation for the decision to outsource cooking.

The partners' enjoyment of cooking predicted how often the family used substitutes for home-prepared meals. The more pleasurable the man and the woman found cooking, the less they outsourced it. Since cooking is traditionally considered a female task, we expected the effect of the woman's preferences to be stronger than that of the man's. This difference was not statistically significant, however, $F(1, 722) = 0.12$, p one-sided = .726).

We found partial support for the hypotheses concerning the interactions between preferences and constraints. The higher the household income, the more likely the male's preferences influenced the decision to outsource cooking. Contrary to our expectation, however, the female's enjoyment in cooking matters less, the higher the income. In addition, the more time a woman or her partner spent working, the more her enjoyment of cooking influenced how often the family ate food prepared outside the household. This latter finding supported our hypothesis that limited time availability increases the importance of preferences in the outsourcing decision.

Preferences and Outsourcing of Child Care

As can be seen in Table 3, the variables included in our model explained much of the variance in the use of professional help when it comes to child care (Model 1: pseudo $R^2 = 40\%$, compared with 24% for cleaning and 16%

for maintenance). Not surprisingly, the most important predictor of outsourcing child care was the number of children younger than 4 years present in the household. Among families with children younger than 13 years, having a child younger than 4 years increased the likelihood of the parents hiring a nanny or making use of child-care facilities. In regard to the partners' participation in paid labor, we found that partners working longer hours and thus having less time left to take care of their children were more likely to outsource child care.

Adding preferences to the model did not improve it. For the man, we did not find evidence that the more pleasure he derived from taking care of and spending time with young children, the less likely the household was to make use of outside help with child care. We did find this effect for the woman, in line with our expectations. The difference between the genders in this respect was significant, $\chi^2(1) = 2.41, p$ one-sided = .012).

The explanatory power of the model did not improve by including the interactions between the partners' preferences and the indicators for financial and time constraints. We did not find any support for our hypotheses that the effect of the partners' task-related preferences depended on the constraints they faced.

Conclusion and Discussion

Domestic outsourcing gives households an important strategy for dealing with the competing demands of work and home. Previous research mainly studied whether resources and constraints influence the outsourcing behaviour of households. These studies typically neglected the role of preferences in deciding whether to outsource household work. However, we argued that household tasks also contain a rewarding component, and that men and women want to do some household tasks themselves. We then attempted to analyze the importance of preferences when deciding to outsource household work, over and above the standard explanations, that is, the constraints the partners face.

Overall, we provided overwhelming support that the more pleasurable household members find a domestic task, the less they outsource it. This is true for all domestic chores, that is, home maintenance, cooking, cleaning, and child care. Our finding is in line with the idea of doing gender. Men and women produce gender by doing certain domestic tasks, and doing domestic tasks itself yields direct utility in the form of the production of gender.

Likewise, we found distinct gender differences when it comes to the influence of preferences on the outsourcing of tasks. The woman's enjoyment of

cleaning and child care was significantly more important in the decision to outsource these duties than the man's, and the man's enjoyment of home maintenance was more important in the decision to outsource this duty than the woman's. The preferences of both partners mattered in the decision to outsource cooking.

Our study also demonstrated that the impact of preferences on the outsourcing decision varied for some tasks depending on financial constraints and time available outside paid work, although not always in the expected direction. A higher household income allowed men to outsource cooking and home maintenance if they did not like doing these chores themselves. Women in families with higher income were less likely to outsource cooking if they enjoyed doing it themselves and more likely to outsource cleaning if they did not enjoy it. Apparently, income is not only an indicator of the money available to outsource a certain task; it also implies that households have more choices (Collins, 2007). It underlines the role of gender production as well since cleaning is a more discretionary task than cooking. If a woman does not like cleaning and enough income is available in the household, there is no need to do gender. Time demands were significantly related only to cooking and in a direction such that the less the time available, the stronger the effect of cooking-related preferences on the outsourcing decision. In summary, the influence of task-related preferences varied depending on the financial and time constraints.

With respect to the standard explanations, we conclude that differences in constraining factors offered a much better explanation of differences in the use of professional outside help for cleaning and child care than for house maintenance jobs and meal preparation. As regards maintenance, this could be due to the fact that maintenance work could be avoided by choosing to live in a less care-intensive dwelling, a strategy particularly available to wealthier couples. Furthermore, one could argue that using the services of a handyman does not necessarily replace own time input but can also complement it: it might well be that people who do a lot around their homes themselves get involved in more ambitious projects that require help from a professional (De Ruijter, 2005). With respect to the decision to prepare meals oneself, constraints again seemed to play a subordinate role. Here, a possible explanation could be that the market offers attractive options (e.g., ethnic cuisine) that not everyone can cook by themselves and, vice-versa, that not every home-made meal can be replaced with a bought one. Such limited substitutability decreases the influence of constraints on the outsourcing decision. A person might be willing to sacrifice many other things before sacrificing that falafel he craves at least once a month. The man's gender expectations

improved the explanation only in the case of home maintenance and child care, in line with earlier research (De Ruijter, 2005). When men's expectations are more egalitarian, these tasks are outsourced more often. Women's expectations do not appear to be important.

We recognize that there are also limitations to the research presented here. Our empirical analysis focused only on couples and did not account for singles. Because singles, and especially single parents, face more pressing financial and time constraints, they have been shown to outsource more (Spitze, 1999). Thus, we expect that a replication of our study focusing on single households may provide better evidence for variations in the effect of preferences because of financial and time constraints.

On the theoretical level, we also recognize the difficulty of making causality claims. Our theoretical reasoning assumes task-related preferences to be a stable personal characteristic. On the one hand, partners performing a domestic task themselves might indicate taking more pleasure in it than partners who outsource it. Our findings would then be just an artifact. However, it is also plausible to assume that the pleasure one takes in domestic labor decreases as the time spent doing it increases. This implies that those who do not outsource will report taking less pleasure in a task than those who do outsource it. In this case, our findings would be even more significant.

Last, although we challenged the assumption that household work cannot be a direct source of utility, we ignored the fact that paid work can also be pleasurable. Although this is irrelevant for our empirical analysis, since we assume that participation in the labor market is exogenous, future theory in this regard could be useful for research on the time allocation between paid and household work.

The current study has highlighted the importance of the pleasure of certain household work when choosing strategies for coping with the time demands of the home. Our findings imply that domestic outsourcing is also a matter of taste, not just a question of need and capability. This suggests that there are limits to outsourcing for some people, and that the creative process of preparing an elaborate meal or the gratification derived from painting the porch by yourself cannot be substituted by a product or a service purchased on the market.

Authors' Note

The authors contributed equally to this article.

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