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Economic Independence or Bargaining Power? The Relationship between Women's Earnings and Housework Time

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ABSTRACT

Studies of gender differences in the domestic division of labour have typically included measures of the relative earnings of husbands and wives to explain how much time each spends on household tasks. The theoretical underpinning for this approach is based on a range of perspectives including role specialization, relative resources and household bargaining. Recently, Gupta (2006, 2007) has argued that wives absolute earnings are more important than relative earnings in determining how much time wives spend on housework. Using US data, he shows that women's housework time depends on the magnitude of their earnings rather than their share of earnings relative to their husbands and that income differences amongst women are as important in explaining women's housework time as the difference between husbands and wives earnings. The current paper builds on Gupta's earlier work in two main ways. First we use data on 1,306 employed married or cohabiting women from Wave 5 of the Households, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey to examine whether women's housework time in Australia is associated with relative or absolute earnings. Second we examine whether the use of paid domestic help and expenditure on meals outside the home reduces women's time on domestic labour. Unlike Gupta, we find more evidence for the relationship between relative earnings and women's housework time than absolute earnings and housework time. Outsourcing domestic work does not significantly reduce women's time on housework once other factors are controlled. Overall our findings, like those of Bittman et al (2003), support an exchange bargaining perspective in Australia. This further suggests that there are real national differences between Australia and the US that are related to the presence of a strong male breadwinner institutional framework in Australia and different labour market and wage structures.

INTRODUCTION

Studies of the domestic division of labour have typically argued that women's and men's housework hours are determined, in part, by the level of resources that each contributes to the household. Resources are usually measured in terms of earnings. The results from a number of studies have found support for this association indicating that an increase in women's relative earnings is associated with a decline in women's time on household tasks (Baxter, 1992; Bittman et. al., 2003; Brines, 1994; Greenstein, 2000; Presser, 1994; Ross, 1987). Two main theoretical explanations have been proposed for this finding; human capital, and exchange bargaining or dependency. Under a human capital, or new home economics approach, it is argued that women and men make differential investments in human capital specializing in either home or market production according to their levels of productivity, skills and expected returns in each area (Becker 1991). This role specialization explains men's higher wages and consequently, their greater time in paid work compared to women who spend more time in domestic work. Exchange bargaining approaches, sometimes referred to as dependency models, argue that men and women negotiate, or bargain, over household labour. Since household work is usually viewed as unpleasant or menial, the person with the most resources, usually men, will bargain their way out of this work, while the person with the least resources, usually women, have less power and hence will spend more time on domestic work (Brines, 1994).

In contrast to these inherently gender-neutral models, feminist research has argued that a process of gender display, or gender deviance neutralization, varies the bargaining process once women attain a certain level of household earnings (Brines 1994; Greenstein 2000; Bittman et. al., 2003). These studies suggest that as women's relative earnings approach or surpass those of their partners, men tend to compensate for their gender-atypical household earnings contribution

by doing less housework, while women compensate by doing more housework. In other words, in circumstances where women earn as much or more than their partner, both men and women display gender appropriate behaviour by reverting to stereotypical involvement in domestic labour.

All of these approaches rely on the assumption that it is women's earnings relative to their partners that influences women's housework time. Recently however, Gupta's (2006, 2007) work has offered a strong challenge to this assumption. He argues that it is women's absolute earnings, rather than their relative earnings, that determine how much time they spend on housework. Gupta's research, based on analyses of US data, shows that women's relative earnings does not influence their housework hours when simultaneously controlling for their own absolute earnings. He also finds women's own earnings are strongly associated with their housework hours, but their partners' earnings are not (2006, 2007). One of the implications of these findings is that the association between men's and women's earnings and their housework hours is not the same. Gupta's work indicates that there is little association between men's earning and their housework hours, but a very strong association between women's earnings and their housework hours, with greater earnings reducing women's time on housework. To date however, the mechanism linking women's earnings with their housework hours has been untested. One possibility is that women use their earnings to purchase household help, thereby lowering their time on housework. Another possibility is that higher earning women live in less tidy houses, possibly as a result of less interest in household duties.

In this paper we examine Gupta's claims using data from Wave 5 of the Households, Income and labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey collected in 2005. We build on his work in two main ways. First we examine whether the association between women's absolute

earnings and their housework hours is evident in Australia. Like the United States, Australia has been classified as belonging to a broadly liberal welfare regime. However there are many differences between the two countries, including the high levels of female part-time employment, possibly indicating a stronger male breadwinner culture, which may influence the relationship between women's earnings and their housework hours. Second Gupta has speculated that women may be more likely than men to use their earnings to pay for household help, thus leading to a reduction in their time on housework. But to date he has been unable to test this association due to a lack of suitable data in the United States. Wave 5 of HILDA includes a measure of whether households pay for domestic labour, as well as amount paid at the household level for meals outside the home. We are thus able to explicitly test the relationship between women's earnings, the extent to which household work is outsourced through the use paid domestic help and meal purchasing, and time spent on household work.

THEORIES OF WOMEN'S TIME ON HOUSEWORK

Both human capital and exchange or dependency theories arrive at the same conclusion - lower relative earnings equate to more time on housework. In the case of human capital theory, this is due to the rational allocation of men's and women's labour in a way that maximises rewards to the household. Women are better suited to household production and therefore invest less time in education and the labour market compared to men. Women thus acquire less human capital that is rewarded in the market, tend to earn less and therefore to spend more time on housework (Becker 1991). In the case of exchange bargaining, or dependency theories, the argument is that women perform more housework because they typically have fewer resources to bargain their way out of this undesirable work (Brines 1994). The assumption here is that as women's

earnings increase, relative to their partner, the division of household labour will become more equal. Further, in the unlikely event that women's earnings exceed those of their partner, then the gender division of labour will be reversed and men will spend more time on housework than women.

In contrast to these inherently economic approaches to explaining the household division of labour, feminist sociologists have argued that gender is an integral component of housework. West and Zimmerman (1987) developed the idea of the performance or display of gender wherein men and women establish and affirm their gender identity by the display of gender appropriate behaviour. Berk (1985) extended this idea to housework arguing that the performance or non-performance of housework is fundamental to the production of gender. She argued that the marital household is a "gender factory" where, in addition to accomplishing tasks, housework produces gender as men and women carry out routine household tasks. This approach has been enormously influential in studies of the domestic division of labour with many finding support for a process of gender display (Brines; 1994; Bittman et. al. 2003; Gupta, 1999; South and Spitze, 1994)

Studies of the domestic division of labour have shown varying support for the economic and gender display models (see Coltrane 2000 for a review). A major advance on adjudicating between these approaches is the work of Brines (1994) who raised the possibility that both economic dependence and gender display operate within a single household with women's housework time better explained by an economic dependence model and men's better explained by gender display. The implication is that the forces governing women's investment in housework are different to those governing men's level of involvement in housework. In other words, not only is housework gendered, but the processes leading to variations in time spent on

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housework may also be gendered. Using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics in the US, Brines showed that as women's relative share of income increased, men increased their share of housework, but only up to a certain point. Once women's earnings reached parity or increased beyond the point of equality, men's housework hours began to decline. Brines argued that in these households, men adopt more traditional behavior in order to negate the gender abnormal behavior of not being the main breadwinner.

More recent studies have extended and refined her work. Greenstein (2000) finds similar results to Brines with an absolute measure of housework hours, but not with a proportional measure of housework. His analyses of the US National Survey of Families and Households finds that breadwinner wives do more housework than would be predicted using a model of economic dependence while dependent husbands did less. His results are consistent with a gender display, or what Greenstein calls a "deviance neutralization" model. Bittman et. al. (2003) examine time use data from Australia and find that economic exchange explains women's housework time up to the point where men's and women's earnings are the same. Once women's earnings exceed men's, "gender trumps money" and women increase their housework time consistent with a model of gender display. This is similar to the findings of Brines and Greenstein. But for men the results differ. Bittman et. al. find no relationship between relative earnings and men's housework hours. They conclude that there are real national differences between the US and Australia to do with the more entrenched nature of the male breadwinner role compared to the US making it even more deviant in Australia for women to be the main breadwinner.

The most recent development in this field is the work of Gupta (2005, 2007) who challenges the view that husbands and wives divide housework on the basis of relative earnings.

Rather he argues that women's housework time is dependent on their absolute earnings not their earnings relative to their husband. Using data from the US National Survey of Families and Households he shows that women's housework time is related to their own earnings with higher earning women spending less time on housework than lower earning women (2006; 2007). He also finds the same relationship amongst single women indicating that the mechanism underlying the relationship between earnings and women's housework time is not linked to economic bargaining or gender display. Gupta's work challenges both economic dependence and gender display theories and suggests that differences amongst women in levels of earnings explains variations in women's housework time, rather than differences in earnings between women and their partners.

He suggests that part of the reason for previous findings of an association between economic dependence and time spent on housework is that women who earn a large share of household earnings are more likely to be in low income household's and thus more likely to be in non-traditional couples where the husband is not employed or employed part-time. This suggests that the reason why women are doing less housework relates to the circumstances of the household rather than women's economic power (Gupta 2007: 403).

Further he finds no association between men's earnings and women's housework time, or men's housework time, suggesting that the relationship between men's earnings and housework is not the same as the relationship between women's earnings and housework. One of the possible implications of Gupta's work is that women act as autonomous economic agents in their households and may use their own earnings in different ways to men. Research on the organisation of family finances has shown evidence of a division of financial labour within households, in addition to evidence that women prioritise different spending areas to men

(Brandon, 1999; Treas 1993). It may be that women's sense of responsibility for housework and other family-related matters such as child care, is so great that they feel a sense of obligation to use their earnings, rather than their partner's, to pay for this work to be done if they are unable or unwilling to do it themselves. Gupta notes a number of studies that support the claim that women are more likely to spend their earnings on family-related expenses than men (see for example Brandon 1999; Lundberg et.al. 1997).

Before we can unravel the theoretical implications of Gupta's findings however, we need to first understand the mechanism by which women's earnings translate into less time on housework? As Gupta (2007; see also Gupta and Ash, 2008) outlines there are a number of possibilities: First women may use their earnings to buy out their time on housework. This may include the use of paid domestic help as well as eating out more often. Second, consistent with an opportunity cost perspective, women with higher earnings may have greater incentive to do less housework because of the potential loss of foregone earnings. Third, higher earning women may feel less obligation to do domestic labour or have less interest in it, and hence less concern about living in an untidy house.

To date available US data has been inadequate to test these potential mechanisms linking women's earnings with their housework time due to the lack of data with both measures of housework time as well as indicators of the mechanisms suggested above. In this paper we use data from the Households, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey to investigate the relationship between women's earnings, housework time and the purchase of domestic help. HILDA has the advantage of providing high quality data on earnings, time spent on a range of domestic tasks, the use of paid domestic help and expenditure on meals outside the home. We are thus able to explicitly test two of the possible mechanisms linking women's

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earnings to reduced time on housework – the use of paid domestic help to buy out time on housework and purchasing meals outside the home which potentially reduces time on meal preparation, clean up and grocery shopping.

We first examine the relationship between relative earnings, absolute earnings and women's housework time. We then examine whether paying for paid domestic help and spending money on purchasing meals reduces women's time on housework to investigate the nature of one possible proposed mechanism between women's earnings and housework time.

METHOD

Data and Sample

The data come from Wave 5 of the HILDA survey collected in 2005. We restrict our analyses to Wave 5 because we are particularly interested in examining the role of paid domestic labour in attenuating women's housework hours and this measure was not included in previous survey waves. Initially our analytic sample includes all partnered women (cohabiting or married) who are employed and earn wages at wave 5 (n = 1,490). We exclude women and their partners who are self employed, as the self employed have different wage determinants and household bargaining theories are better represented by wage earnings. We create a "couple" data file matching women's data with their male partner's (we did not include same sex couples in our analysis). Due to missing values on key variables such as women's housework hours (n = 115), men's and women's wages (n = 77) and other covariates, such as work hours, attitudes and number of children (n = 107) our final analytic sample comprises 1,306 women.

Dependent Variable

The outcome measure is female partners housework hours derived from a question asking respondents how many hours they would spend in a typical week on housework (including preparing meals, washing dishes, cleaning house, washing clothes). These are the household tasks that are necessary in all households on a regular basis, unlike other activities such as outdoor tasks that may be more intermittent, or dependent on the season or type of household dwelling (Gupta 1999: 710). This is preferable to a relative measure as these are based on the proportion of housework carried out by each partner and thus a change in women's scores may reflect a change in partner's behaviour rather than a change in women's behaviour. The measure used here is also comparable to the dependent variable used in many recent quantitative studies of housework time (eg. Brines, 1994; Gupta, 1999; Gupta 2007).

An alternative means of collecting data on housework time is via time diary estimates (Bianchi et.a l., 2006; Bittman et.al. 2003). Comparisons of the results from survey and time diary estimates of housework measurement have consistently found that survey estimates such as those used here tend to produce larger estimates of time spent on housework than those obtained via time use diaries (Marini and Shelton 1993; Lee and Waite 2006). This is due in part to the inclusion of secondary activities and multi tasking in survey estimates (Lee and Waite 2006). Nevertheless despite differences in absolute housework estimates the factors predicting housework time are similar for both survey and time use estimates, suggesting no systematic bias in the patterns of results (Baxter and Bittman 1995). Moreover, currently available time diary data in Australia do not include measures of additional variables requited in the current analyses, such as use of paid domestic labour and attitudes to the gender division of labour.

Independent Variables

Earnings Measures

We use four different measures to investigate whether it is women's own earnings or their earnings relative to their partners that most influence their housework hours. Own earnings are measured by weekly gross wages or salary for all jobs worked. We include two separate wages measures; one for women and one for their partner. We then use weekly wages of women and their partners to generate a measure of relative earnings. This is done by summing the weekly wages of both partners and dividing women's wages by total weekly wages. This measure thus represents women's weekly wages as a proportion of total household wages. To test whether the relationship between relative earnings and women's housework time is non linear, as found by Bittman et.al. (2003), we create a measure of squared relative earnings.

Domestic Outsourcing

To examine whether increased earnings leads to a reduction in women's hours of housework via the use of paid domestic help or purchasing meals outside the home we use two measures of domestic outsourcing. The first is an indicator of whether the household pays for domestic help on a regular basis. This question asks: "Does your household regularly pay someone to do any of the housework (cleaning, washing, ironing, cooking, etc)?" We include this as a dummy variable coded 1 = yes. The other is a continuous measure indicating the amount of money ($AUD) spent each week in the household on purchasing meals outside the home.

Controls

We also include controls for a range of other socioeconomic and demographic characteristics that have been found to influence women's housework hours. We include continuous measures for hours of paid employment each week for women and their partners. Highest level of education for women and their partner is measured by four groups including 1 = year 12 or less,

2 = trade/certificate, 3 = diploma and 4 = bachelor degree or higher, with year 12 or less as the reference group. We also include controls for women's age and their ethnic background. Ethnic background is measured as 1 = Australian born, 2 = migrant, English speaking and 3 = migrant, non-English speaking, with Australian born as the reference category.

We include measures of women's and their partner's attitudes towards a male breadwinner division of labour. This question asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the item: "It is much better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children" Response categories ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). We included the item in the models as a continuous measure.

We also include a range of measures at the household level which may be associated with women's housework hours. These include an indicator for whether the couple are living in a defacto cohabiting relationship or a legally registered marriage (1 =cohabiting). Previous research has found that cohabiting women spend less time on housework than married women (Shelton and John 1994; South and Spitze, 1994). We control for the number of dependent children (defined as < 18) in the household as previous research indicates that women's time on housework increases when there are children at home (Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes, 2008). We also control for whether the couple own their home or not as it is possible that some women will devote more time to housework if they are living in their own home compared to a rental property.

Means and standard deviations for all variables are shown in Table 1.

(TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE)

Analytic Strategy

Given that our dependent variable is continuous we use ordinary least squares regression to estimate our models. We estimate five models. In Model 1 we examine the association between relative wages and relative wages squared and women's housework hours, controlling for household wages. We control for household wages to assess whether the association between women's relative earnings and their housework time holds across all households regardless of earnings levels. Recall that Gupta's argument is that women are most likely to be the main earners in low-income households. Thus in order to fully test the effect of relative earnings on women's housework time we need to control for household earnings. In the second model we examine the association between women's and their partner's absolute wages and women's housework hours. In Model 3 we include both relative and absolute wages to test whether the associations remain when we control for both absolute and relative wages. In Model 4 we add the measures for domestic outsourcing to Model 3 to investigate if the associations between earnings and housework hours are mediated by "buying" out domestic tasks. In the final model (Model 5) we include all controls.

RESULTS

Our results are presented in Table 2. In Model 1 we find that the higher the proportion of weekly wages women contributed to the household the less time they spend on housework. This is consistent with the expectation of exchange bargaining and dependency theories and similar to many previous studies of domestic labour, with the important exception of Gupta's (2005, 2007) recent work. The significant squared term for relative wages indicates that this association is curvilinear with the association attenuated as women contribute a greater proportion of wages to the household. In other words, once women's relative earnings reach a certain point, 72.77% of

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household income, their time on housework begins to increase. Only in 5% of households do women earn more than 72% of the household income. This is very similar to the results reported by Bittman et. al. (2003) who report that Australian women do more housework as their contribution to household income rises above 50 percent. Taken together, these two findings suggest support for both an exchange bargaining and a gender display model. Exchange bargaining explains women's housework time when women are earning less than 72.77% of household earnings, but once this point is reached, a theory of gender display explains why women would compensate for earning more than men by spending more time on housework.

In Model 2 we examine the association between women's and men's absolute earnings and housework time. Consistent with Gupta's claims we find that that as women's absolute wages increase, their time on housework declines. However, in Model 3 when we include both measures of absolute and relative earnings, the association between women's absolute earnings and their housework time is no longer significant. This is the opposite of Gupta's findings in the United States. Consistent with an exchange bargaining and dependency model of housework time, we find stronger support for the effect of women's relative earnings on housework time than women's absolute earnings.

Interestingly, we also find a significant positive association between men's earnings and women's housework time in Model 2. The coefficient here indicates that an increase in men's absolute earnings is associated with an increase in women's housework time, perhaps because higher earning men spend longer hours in paid work. In Model 3 however, this coefficient is negative and significant when we include both relative and absolute earnings in the model. The shift in the sign of the coefficient for men's earnings across models 2 and 3 suggests that the findings in model 2 are confounded by the absence of other key variables, including relative

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earnings. Once relative earnings are included some of these factors are controlled and we see that men's earnings are negatively associated with women's housework time, a result that remains in Models 4 and 5 when additional variables are controlled.

In Model 4 we include the measures of domestic outsourcing. The associations for relative and own wages stay the same. Paying for domestic labour is not significantly associated with women's housework hours, although the direction of the association is in the expected direction. In contrast, the amount of expenditure on meals outside the home significantly reduces women's time in housework. The interpretation of this coefficient is multiplicative, so for every \$1 spent on meals, women's housework hours are reduced by 0.0127 hours. For instance if a household spent \$100 per week in purchasing meals outside the home women's housework hours are reduced by 1.27 hours per week.

In the final model we include both relative and absolute measures of earnings, measures of domestic outsourcing and all additional controls. The addition of the controls in the model reduces the magnitude of the coefficients, with the exception of partner's earnings, but the results remain the same as for model 3. Relative earnings are significantly associated with women's housework time, but only up to the point where women earn 67.09% of household earnings. At this point, the findings are consistent with a model of gender display with women compensating for their additional earnings by doing more housework. Women's own earnings are not significantly related to their housework time. But as partner's earnings increase, women spend less time on housework suggesting that women partnered with higher earning men are able to reduce their time on housework. But this is not by paying someone else to do this work, or by spending more on meals outside the home. Neither measure of domestic outsourcing is associated with women's time on housework in this model.

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To further clarify the relationship between relative wages and women's housework hours we plot the predicted values for women's housework hours by their relative earnings as shown in Figure 1. The figure shows that higher relative wages decreases women's time spent in housework up to the point where women earn around 70% or more of household wages. Beyond this point, there is no substantial additional reduction of their time in housework. Rather we see a slight increase in women's housework time as they approach the point where they are contributing 100% of relative earnings.

The results in Model 4 also show that time spent in paid work by both partners is a significant factor associated with women's housework time. As women's paid work hours increase, their time on housework declines, and as men's paid work time increases women's housework time increases. This suggests that women adjust their housework time to accommodate both their own paid labour demands and the gaps in housework time created by their partners paid work. There is a strong effect of partnership type with cohabiting women spending significantly less time on housework than married women. This is consistent with previous research (Blair and Lichter 1991; Shelton and John 1993; South and Spitze 1994; Gupta 1999). Also consistent with previous research, we find that women with more liberal attitudes to the gender division of labour spend less time on housework than women with more traditional attitudes. But interestingly, partner's attitudes to the gender division of labour are not significantly associated with women's housework hours. We also find that older women and those with more children also spend more time on housework than their counterparts. Again, this finding supports previous research (Baxter, 2002).

DISCUSSION

Our main aim in this paper was to examine Gupta's claims that women's absolute earnings are more important for explaining women's housework time than relative earnings, and additionally, to test whether this relationship resulted from women's greater economic autonomy to buy out their time on housework by outsourcing some of this work. Our main finding is that there is little support for Gutpa's theory of women's autonomy in Australia. In contrast to his recent work, we find much greater support for a theory of economic exchange or dependence, moderated by gender display in households where women earn the bulk of earnings.

Our results show that purchasing meals outside the home reduces women's time spent on housework, but once other controls are included the relationship is no longer significant. We find no relationship between paying for domestic labour and women's housework time. This is contrary to the findings of studies from other countries (Oropesa 1993) but consistent with our earlier work on paid domestic labour (Baxter, 2005; Baxter, Hewitt and Western, 2009). Our earlier work showed that the cultural and institutional features shaping the employment of paid domestic labour in Australia are quite different to those found in other advanced countries, including labour policies that limit the availability of a cheap pool of migrant labourers and a strong male breadwinner culture that mitigates against the substitution of women's labour in the home for paid help. Consequently the use of paid domestic labour is quite limited in Australia compared to other countries in the region or to other advanced economies. Additionally, we showed that using paid domestic help is dependent not just on being able to afford domestic help, or having a high level of household work to perform, but is also related to attitudes about paid domestic help. Thus even if Australian women are able to afford paid help with housework tasks, cultural and institutional factors intervene to mitigate against the likelihood of using paid domestic help.

Our results in terms of exchange bargaining and gender display theories of women's housework time are very similar to those obtained by Bittman et.al. (2003) using the 1992 Australian Bureau of Statistics Time Use survey. In that paper it was reported that US women do less housework across the full range of relative household earnings consistent with an exchange bargaining theory of housework time. But in Australia their results showed that this model held only for couples where women earned less than their husbands. After this point, Australian women responded by increasing their housework time to alleviate their gender deviant earnings share.

Overall then our results indicate that Australia is different to the US in terms of the relationship between women's earnings and their housework time. Why is this the case? It may be that in the US the relationship between women's economic autonomy and their housework hours is the result of buying out time on housework through the use of paid domestic help. Although we did not find this relationship in Australia, as noted above this may be because the institutional features shaping the use of paid domestic help are different in Australia compared to the US. Until a dataset becomes available in the US that includes both quality measures of housework time, earnings and measures of paid domestic help we will not be able to test this association.

Alternatively, our results are also consistent with the view that Australia is a much stronger male-breadwinner culture than the US. In 2005, women held just over 70 per cent of all part-time jobs in Australia (ABS, 2006 p.115) and 52 per cent of women with a child aged 0-4 were employed, but most were in part-time jobs (ABS, 2006 p.114). Most men, on the other hand, work full-time for almost all of their working lives. Much research has shown that the macro institutional features of society impact the micro level arrangements within households

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(Treas and Drobnic, forthcoming; Cooke, 2007). If this is the case, the stronger male breadwinner culture in Australia may make it more difficult for Australian women to translate their greater earnings into reduced time on housework than is the case in the United States. Compared to women in the United States, Australian women may be more closely locked into an exchange bargaining or dependence relationship with their partners as a result of their weaker attachment to paid labour as indicated by higher rates of part-time employment. As Bittman et. al (2003) speculate, in the few households where women are employed fulltime and do earn more than men, their gender deviant behaviour may be so uncommon that they attempt to alleviate the imbalance by increasing their housework time. Or it may be that men are unwilling to increase their housework time beyond a certain point requiring women to fill the gap regardless of women's relative earnings. Our earlier research has shown that compared to women, men's housework time remains very stable over the life course regardless of other events such as marriage and the birth of children (Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes, 2008). Under these circumstances it seems that the gender gap in housework time is unlikely to reduce further unless Australia moves away from a male-breadwinner institutional framework that accommodates gender equality in paid and unpaid work.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics of housework hours and model covariates

	Mean	SD[a]
Female partner housework hours	14.99	10. 27
Earnings measures:		
Relative wages (% female to male)	39.52	19.08
Relative wages (squared)	1925.98	1896.47
Household wages (model 1 only)	1793.60	849.22
Female partner own wages (weekly)	682.64	418.39
Male partner own wages (weekly)	1110.96	661.12
Domestic Outsourcing		
Pay for housework (1 = yes)	0.12	
Meals outside home (AU$ week)	55.05	47.02
Female partner's characteristics		
Female partner work hours	31.74	13.43
Female partner age	39.57	10.40
Female partner ethnic background:		
Australian born	0.80	
Overseas born – English speaking	0.09	
Overseas born – Non-English speaking	0.11	
Female partner education:		
Yr 12 or less	0.38	
Trade/certificate	0.16	
Diploma	0.11	
Bachelor degree or higher	0.35	
Attitudes to male breadwinner (1 SD – 7 SA)	2.76	1.68
Male partner's characteristics		
Male partner work hours	45.62	11.42
Male partner education		
Yr 12 or less	0.28	
Trade/certificate	0.30	
Diploma	0.11	
Bachelor degree or higher	0.31	
Attitudes to male breadwinner (1 SD – 7 SA)	3.12	1.70
Household characteristics		
Number of children <18	2.19	2.23
Purchasing/own home (1=yes)	0.80	
Cohabiting (1 = yes)	0.22	
N	1306	

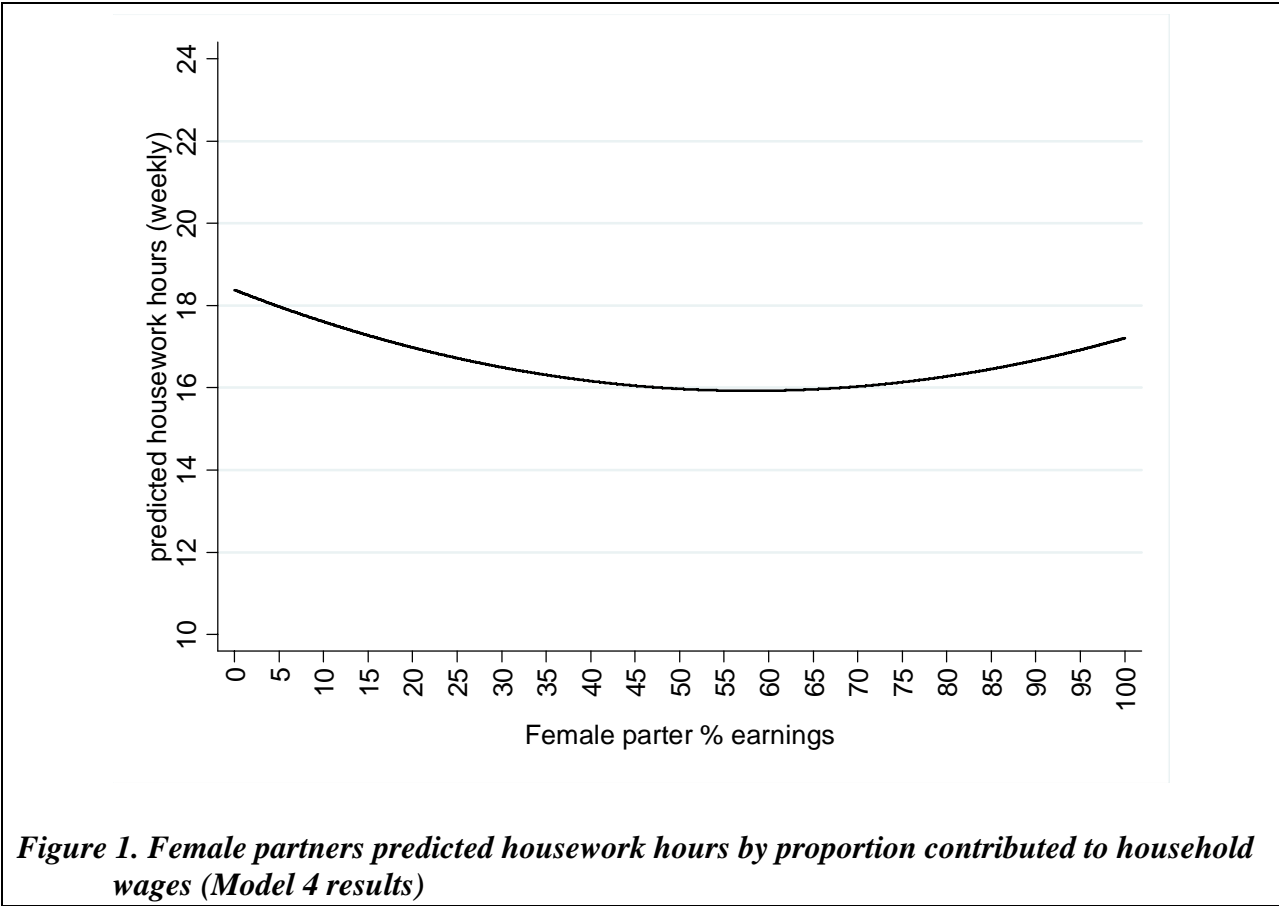[a] standard deviation only reported for continuous measures

Table 2. The associations between partnered women's housework hours and their relative and absolute earnings

	model 1: Relative wages	model 2: Absolute wages	model 3: Relative + absolute	model 4: + Domestic outsourcing	model 5: + All Controls
Earnings measures:					
Relative wages	-0.3337***		-0.3224***	-0.3232***	-0.1489**
Relative wages (squared)	0.0024***		0.0023***	0.0023***	0.0009*
Household wages	-0.0015***				
Female partner own wages		-0.0060***	-0.0017	-0.0016	0.0008
Male partner own wages		0.0008*	-0.0013*	-0.0012*	-0.0019***
Domestic outsourcing					
Pay for housework (1 = yes)				1.0213	-0.5775
Meals outside home (AU$ week)				-0.0127**	-0.0053
Female partner's characteristics					
Female partner work hours					-0. 1602***
Female partner age					0.1291***
Female partner ethnic background:					
Australian born					-
Overseas born – English speaking					-0.3020
Overseas born – NESB					0.4232
Female partner education:					
Yr 12 or less					-
Trade/certificate					0.2288
Diploma					0.8360
Bachelor degree or higher					0.9472
Attitudes to male breadwinner					0. 4110**
Male partner's characteristics					
Male partner work hours					0.0558**
Male partner education					
Yr 12 or less					-
Trade/certificate					0.5500
Diploma					-0.8783
Attitudes to male breadwinner					-0.1575
					-0.0071

<u>Household characteristics</u>					
Number of children < 18					0.9468***
Purchasing/own home (1=yes)					1.4056*
Cohabiting (1 = yes)					-1.2443*
Constant	26.24***	18.20***	26.92***	26.23***	14.03***
Observations	1306	1306	1306	1306	1306
R-squared	0.08	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.23

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

Figure 1. Female partners predicted housework hours by proportion contributed to household wages (Model 4 results)

Note: Graph holds covariates constant at mean or modal responses (see Table 1).