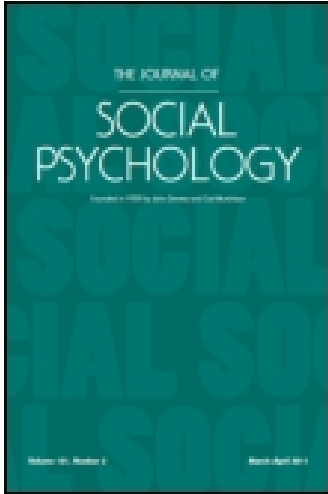


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Equality in the Division of Household Labor: A Comparative Study of Jewish Women and Arab Muslim Women in Israel

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ABSTRACT. In this study, the author compared perceptions of gender-based equality in the division of household labor among Jewish women ($n = 60$) and Arab Muslim women ($n = 62$) from dual-earner families in Israel. Guided by theories regarding the division of household labor, the author also explored the impact of 3 sets of variables—resources, gender-role attitudes, and job flexibility (flextime)—on perceived equality in the division of household labor. The findings revealed that the Jewish women tended to perceive the division of household labor as more egalitarian than did their Arab Muslim counterparts. Furthermore, the Jewish women had more egalitarian gender-role attitudes and more job flexibility than did the Arab Muslim women. However, all 3 sets of variables predicted perceived equality in the division of household labor to the same extent for both groups of women. Moreover, for both groups, education level correlated with attitudes toward household labor and with extent of job flexibility. Overall, the findings suggest that education may contribute to improving women's quality of life in both traditional and modern sociocultural contexts.

Keywords: Arab Muslim, egalitarian division of household labor, flextime, Jewish, traditional societies

ISRAEL, LIKE MANY WESTERN SOCIETIES, has witnessed the massive entry of women into the labor market in recent decades, with a particularly substantial rise in the proportion of married women working outside of the home (Israeli, 1999). Studies have shown that regardless of age, race, ethnicity, or marital status, women spend more time on household tasks than do men (Bergen, 1991; Blair, 1993; Demo & Acock, 1993; Word, 1993). Thompson and Walker (1995) found that, on average, wives do two to three times more family work than do husbands. Nonetheless, recent decades have witnessed changes in several domains of family life. For example, although child rearing is still considered to be a predominantly feminine task (Leslie, Anderson, & Branson, 1991), there is a growing trend

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toward paternal participation in child care (Fogiel-Bijaoui, 1999). Moreover, men have begun to participate more in chores outside the home, such as shopping and errands (Izraeli, 1992; Walker, 1999). In light of this trend, in the present study I aimed to examine factors related to the perceived division of household labor among Jewish women and Arab Muslim women in dual-earner families in Israel.

Previous researchers in this area have relied on two conceptual approaches to explain the factors that determine the division of household labor: the *microsystem perspective*, which focuses on spousal characteristics, and the *macrosystem perspective*, which focuses on the sociocultural context in which the spousal unit functions.

The Microsystem Perspective

Researchers have used three major theories to understand how microlevel variables may affect the division of household labor: (a) the relative resources approach, (b) the gender role approach, and (c) the time available approach.

The *relative resources theory* argues that the allocation of housework reflects power relations between men and women (for a review, see Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000). Whereas some researchers interpret the concept of relative resources in terms of the advantage that one partner has over the other partner (Blood & Wolfe, 1960), other researchers interpret this relativity in absolute terms (i.e., each person's level of resources as compared with others in the general population; Blau, 1964; Katz, 1980). For example, when women have higher levels of two major resources—education and stable employment (as reflected in number of work hours)—they are generally expected to have more power in the dyadic unit, which creates a more egalitarian division of labor in the household (see Kulik, 1992). Consistent with this argument, researchers have found that women's employment (Brines, 1994; Shelton, 1992) and education (Bergen, 1991; Brines; South & Spitze, 1994) are generally associated with a more egalitarian division of household labor.

With regard to men, findings on the relationship between resources and the division of household labor are less consistent. For example, some researchers have found a positive relationship between men's education and their time spent on housework (Bergen, 1991; Brines, 1994), whereas other researchers have found more complex relationships (e.g., a curvilinear relationship) between those variables (Shelton, 1992). As for extent of employment, researchers have found that the number of work hours outside the home is negatively associated with housework hours (Coltrane & Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Kamo, 1988; South & Spitze, 1994).

The second microlevel theory, which focuses on the impact of gender-role attitudes, argues that more egalitarian perceptions of men's and women's roles lead to a more equal division of labor in the home (Greenstein, 1996). From childhood onward, women and men acquire gender-role attitudes, including norms governing masculine and feminine behavior, through a process of socialization. Thus, consciously or unconsciously, they develop a *gender strategy*—a program

for the application to their lives of the gender ideology that they are exposed to and that defines female and male roles for them (Hochschild, 1997). By adulthood, most women and men will behave according to the gender roles they have been exposed to and have prepared themselves to adopt. In general, research findings show that this theory holds for women (Kulik & Rayyan, 2006) but is even more valid for men (e.g., Baxter, 1992; Presser, 1994).

The third microlevel theory, the *time available theory*, argues that the number of hours a woman works outside the home is associated with the number of hours she spends on domestic work. Thus, if a woman has a more flexible work schedule, she may have more time available for household tasks. Today, flextime employment has become a widespread alternative method for setting work schedules in the United States, Europe, and, recently, Israel. Flextime arrangements take different forms and allow both men and women to vary their arrival and departure from work, usually with the provision that everyone works a specified quota of hours a day. Some systems allow workers to accumulate hours by taking work home and to work overtime in exchange for extra vacation leave (Olmstead, 1996). These arrangements were originally considered particularly helpful to women, who could adjust their work hours to their children's schedules (Cook, 1992). According to the time-available perspective, one can expect that the more flexible are the woman's work hours, the more time she will have to devote to household chores, and, in turn, the more traditional will be the division of labor in the home. However, studies on this topic portray a more complex relationship. For example, Bohen and Viveros-Long (1981) and Lee (1983) found that flexible work patterns lead to more egalitarian parenting and division of household labor only when the parents hold nontraditional gender-role expectations.

In the present study, I used each of the above three theoretical approaches to examine microlevel factors that affect the division of household labor. Regarding the relative resources theory, I examined the husband's and wife's education level and extent of employment, which are considered resources because they are usually related to higher income and socioeconomic status. Regarding the gender role theory, I considered the wife's attitudes toward gender roles in the family and society. Regarding the time available theory, I considered the extent of flextime in the wife's job.

The Macrosystem Approach

Another well-known approach to examining the division of household labor is through the macrolevel perspective (Blumberg, 1984; Rodman, 1972). According to that approach, microlevel units such as households are hosted in the context of macrolevel units such as class or ethnicity. Thus, in addition to the impact of personal factors (e.g., resources, gender-role attitudes, time availability), macrolevel factors such as sociocultural context can affect the division of household labor. For example, one characteristic of a culture is its gender-role ideology (patriarchal-hierarchical vs.

egalitarian), which can affect the roles that men and women are expected to fulfill in the home, workplace, and society at large. In patriarchal societies, the woman's primary roles are those of mother, wife, and daughter, whereas the man's primary role is that of breadwinner. Such societies establish different norms and rules on the basis of gender, and women tend to be subordinate to men. However, in egalitarian societies, most people believe that men and women are entitled to equal status and rewards (Moore, 2000). Moreover, in patriarchal societies, even when women have extensive resources, they do not necessarily have a power advantage. However, the exchange of resources for power is more common in egalitarian societies (Rodman). As a result, negotiations regarding the division of household labor are prevalent in egalitarian cultures, with each spouse expressing his or her expectations and preferences concerning domestic tasks (Buckley, 1967).

Consistent with this approach, research findings have revealed that gender-role ideology in the sociocultural context affects the division of labor in the home. For example, Fuwa (2004) found that in countries characterized by a traditional gender-role ideology, such as France, Italy, and Greece, the division of labor in the home is more rigid than in countries with a liberal gender-role orientation, such as England, Sweden, and the United States. The multicultural character of Israeli society makes it fertile ground for examining the impact of gender-role ideology on the dynamics of the dyadic unit. Israel's multicultural character is expressed in its demographic composition, in which the larger Jewish society, which is considered modern and egalitarian, is distinguished from the minority Arab Muslim society, which is considered traditional and patriarchal (Barakat, 1993; Fogiel-Bijaoui, 1999; Hasan, 1999). Although both Jewish and Arab Muslim societies in Israel have undergone processes of modernization over the past 4 decades (Haj-Yahia, 1995; Shokeid, 1993), the rate of exposure and subsequent change has been faster in Jewish society, as indicated by levels of women's education and employment outside of the home (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002; Working Group on the Status of Palestinian Women Citizens of Israel, 1997).

My underlying assumption in the present study was that sociocultural context provides an appropriate framework for understanding differences in the allocation of household tasks between Jews and Arab Muslims in Israel. I analyzed the division of household labor along three dimensions: domestic, outside, and technical chores.

Hypotheses

On the basis of the above theoretical and empirical background, I developed the following hypotheses for the present study:

Hypothesis 1 (H_1): Jewish women will perceive the division of household chores as more egalitarian than will their Arab Muslim counterparts.

H_2 : Jewish women will have more liberal gender-role attitudes than will their Arab Muslim counterparts.

H_3 : Because Jewish society is considered more modern than Arab Muslim society, Jewish women will be more likely to have flexible work arrangements than will their Arab Muslim counterparts.

H_4 : There will be a relationship between resources (education, extent of employment) and perceived equality in the division of household labor. This relationship will be stronger for Jewish women than for Arab Muslim women.

H_5 : The more liberal are the woman's gender-role attitudes, the more she will perceive the actual division of household labor as egalitarian. This relationship will be stronger for Jewish women than for Arab Muslim women.

H_6 : The more flexible is the woman's work schedule, the more control she will have over her time, the more time she will be able to devote to household tasks, and the more traditional will be the division of labor in her home. This relationship will be stronger for Jewish women than for Arab Muslim women.

In addition, I examined the combined contribution of the research variables to predicting the division of household labor.

Method

Participants

The results presented in this article are based on a comprehensive survey of Jewish and Arab Muslim families in Israel, in which I examined various aspects of family and work life. I collected data from October 2000 to April 2001. Participants in the present study were married mothers who work outside the home. The Arab Muslim participants were Hebrew-speaking residents of five villages in the central and northern regions of Israel.

The initial sample consisted of 79 Jewish women and 87 Arab Muslim women. The women in both groups held senior administrative positions in the education system or the municipality. Because the mean age of the Arab women was below that of their Jewish counterparts, I matched the groups for that variable. After matching, the final sample included 60 Jewish women ($M_{\text{age}} = 36.5$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 8.2$ years) and 62 Arab Muslim women ($M_{\text{age}} = 35.2$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 7.8$ years). The mean number of children per family was 2.6 ($SD = 1.8$) for Jewish women and 3.3 ($SD = 1.5$) for Arab Muslim women (for a distribution of the other background variables, see Table 1).

Instruments

Sociodemographic background questionnaire. This measure obtained background data, including information on education level and extent of employment (full-time vs. part-time) for the women and their spouses.

Gender-role attitudes questionnaire. This measure was based on an instrument developed initially by Katz (1980) and expanded by Kulik (1995). The question-

TABLE 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (Jewish and Arab Muslim Women; *N* = 122)

Demographic variable	Jewish women (<i>n</i> = 60)		Arab Muslim women (<i>n</i> = 62)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Education level				
Partial secondary	13	21	12	18.0
Secondary diploma	13	21	8	14.8
Academic degree	34	58	42	67.2
Extent of job position				
Full time	34	58	26	42
Part time	26	42	36	58
Education level of spouse				
Partial secondary	18	31	7	10
Secondary diploma	15	24	16	25
Academic degree	27	45	39	65
Extent of spouse's job position				
Full-time	45	75.8	57	91.7
Part-time	15	24.2	5	8.3

Note. Percentages calculated out of number of participants in subgroup (either 60 or 62), not out of total number of participants in the study (122).

naire included six items dealing with gender-role attitudes in various areas, such as women's employment outside of the home (e.g., "Both the husband and wife share the same degree of responsibility for supporting the family") and parental responsibility for child care (e.g., "The father and mother share equal responsibility for child care"). I previously found that the questionnaire distinguished between Israeli women and new immigrants from the former Soviet Union (Kulik, 2000). Participants responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). In the data-processing stage, I reverse-coded several items so higher scores would reflect more liberal attitudes toward gender roles. I derived one score for each participant by averaging their responses to all six items in the scale. The reliability of the questionnaire (Cronbach's α) was .89 for Jewish women and .82 for Arab Muslim women.

Division of household tasks questionnaire. I measured the division of household tasks with a questionnaire constructed by Mann-Kanovitz (1977) and adapted by Kulik (2002). The questionnaire included Mann-Kanovitz's original 15-item instrument and 4 additional items that reflected technical areas that had not been examined in the original questionnaire. The Kulik (2002) questionnaire distinguished between division of household tasks (a) at home and outside the home

and (b) before and after retirement. For each item, participants indicated, on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*wife always*) to 7 (*husband always*), whether they or their husbands perform the task. Varimax-rotated factor analysis of the 19 items revealed three factors that combined to explain 75% of the variance in the division of household tasks. The first factor included tasks performed in the home, such as cooking, ironing, and laundry (Domestic Tasks; $\alpha = .83$). The second factor included tasks related to technical maintenance of the home, such as furniture repairs, plumbing, and electrical repairs (Technical Tasks; $\alpha = .86$). The third factor included activities that link domestic life with outside affairs, such as errands (e.g., paying bills) or contact with bureaucratic organizations (Outside Tasks; $\alpha = .85$).

To design a new scale that reflected equality in the division of household tasks, I recoded the basic scale of the above-mentioned instrument as follows: I combined endpoints 1 (*wife always*) and 7 (*husband always*) of the original scale to create endpoint 1 (*very nonegalitarian division of household tasks*) of the new scale. I combined points 2 (*usually wife*) and 6 (*usually husband*) of the original scale to create point 2 (*nonegalitarian division of household tasks*) of the new scale. I combined points 3 (*wife sometimes*) and 5 (*husband sometimes*) of the original scale to create point 3 (*somewhat egalitarian*) of the new scale. Midpoint 4 remained the same, reflecting maximal equality. The higher were their scores in the new scale, the more the women perceived the division of household labor as egalitarian.

Flextime questionnaire. I developed this instrument for the current study to examine the degree of flexibility in the women's places of work on the basis of criteria such as opportunities to set flexible arrival and departure times and to take some work home. The questionnaire consisted of seven items (e.g., "I can set my arrival time at work"; "I can take work home"), which participants rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*almost always*). I derived one score for each participant by computing the mean of her ratings on all seven items in the scale; higher scores reflected more flexibility in the women's jobs. The Cronbach's alpha reliability value of the questionnaire was .86.

Results

Differences in Perceptions of Equality in the Division of Household Labor Between Jewish Women and Arab Muslim Women (H_1)

The division of household tasks measure comprised three domains: domestic tasks, technical tasks, and outside tasks. One-way multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs), which I conducted to examine the differences between Jewish women and Arab Muslim women in their perceived division of household labor, revealed significant differences between the groups, as I expected, $F(2,$

119) = 19.46, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .19$. Furthermore, univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs), which I conducted separately for each factor, revealed significant differences for two types of tasks: outside tasks and domestic tasks (see Table 2). However, I did not find differences between the groups with regard to technical tasks.

Table 2 shows that Jewish women reported greater equality in domestic and outside tasks than did Arab Muslim women. To examine differences between Jewish women and Arab Muslim women in their rankings of perceived equality by type of task (from most egalitarian to least egalitarian), I performed a 2 (Sociocultural Context: Jewish and Arab Muslim) \times 3 (Type of Task: domestic, technical, and outside) ANOVA with repeated measurements for type of task. The ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between sociocultural context and type of task: $F(2, 240) = 6.82$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .12$. Simple effects comparisons revealed that the differences between the three areas of household labor were greater for the Arab Muslim women than for the Jewish women: $F(2, 122) = 30.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .33$; and $F(2, 118) = 14.62$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .20$, respectively (see Table 2). Moreover, as Table 2 shows, the least egalitarian domain among Arab women was domestic tasks, followed by technical and outside tasks. In contrast, among Jewish women, technical tasks were least egalitarian, followed by domestic and outside tasks.

Differences Between Jewish Women and Arab Muslim Women by Predictor Variables (Resources, Gender-Role Attitudes, and Flexitime; H₂, H₃)

As Table 3 shows, sociocultural context (1 = Arab Muslim, 2 = Jewish) correlated with women's resources. The direction of the correlation indicated that Jewish participants had higher levels of education than did their Arab Muslim counterparts ($r = .17$, $p < .05$) and that the extent of employment was greater among Jewish women ($r = .16$, $p < .05$). I also found significant correlations

TABLE 2. Differences Between Jewish and Arab Muslim Participants in Perceptions of Equality in the Division of Household Labor in Their Homes

Type of task	Jewish women		Arab Muslim women		$F(1, 120)$
	M	SD	M	SD	
Outside	2.66	0.72	2.30	0.65	3.75**
Domestic	2.27	0.66	1.42	0.48	19.07***
Technical	2.02	0.79	1.79	0.76	1.67

Note. Scores are based on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (very nonegalitarian division of household labor) to 4 (maximal equality in the division of household labor).

TABLE 3. Intercorrelations Between Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Outside tasks	—	.47***	.15*	.27***	.13	.13	-.06	.26***	.09	.24***
2. Domestic tasks		—	.12	.19*	.13	.26**	-.15*	.48***	.27***	.57***
3. Technical tasks			—	.18*	-.09	-.02	.01	.10	.11	.11
4. Wife's education				—	.06	.47***	-.06	.21**	.01	.17*
5. Extent of wife's employment					—	.01	.06	.05	.06	.16*
6. Husband's education						—	-.27**	.26***	.05	.24**
7. Extent of husband's employment							—	-.13	-.10	.23**
8. Gender-role attitudes								—	.22	.52***
9. Flextime									—	.53***
10. Sociocultural context										—

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

between sociocultural context and husband's resources (education and extent of employment): Jewish husbands had higher levels of education than did Arab Muslim husbands ($r = .24, p < .01$), and the extent of the husband's employment was greater among the Jewish participants than among their Arab Muslim counterparts ($r = .23, p < .01$; see Table 3). Moreover, a MANOVA revealed significant differences between Jewish women and Arab Muslim women with regard to gender-role attitudes and flextime, $F(2, 119) = 38.56, p < .001, \eta^2 = .19$. Likewise, separate ANOVAs for each of the factors revealed differences between Jewish women and Arab Muslim women in each of the two predictor variables. Jewish women perceived their jobs outside the home as being more flexible than did Arab Muslim women ($M = 3.09, SD = 0.61$, and $M = 2.18, SD = 0.74$, respectively). In addition, the gender-role attitudes of the Jewish women were more liberal than those of their Arab Muslim counterparts ($M = 4.21, SD = 0.61$, and $M = 3.44, SD = 0.65$, respectively).

Correlations Between Predictor Variables and Perceived Equality in the Division of Household Tasks (H_4, H_5, H_6)

To examine the relationships between the predictor variables (resources, gender-role attitudes, and flextime) and outcome variables (perceived equality in the three dimensions of household labor), I calculated Pearson correlations separately for Jewish women and Arab Muslim women. Fisher's Z tests revealed no significant differences in the correlation patterns between the predictor and outcome variables among the two groups of women. Therefore, only the general Pearson correlation scores for both groups of women are presented here.

Table 3 lists the correlations between predictor and outcome variables. I found several significant correlations between resources and the three dimensions of household tasks. Education correlated with perceived division of domestic, outside, and technical tasks: The higher were the women's levels of education, the more they perceived the division of domestic, outside, and technical tasks as egalitarian. Additionally, the higher were the husbands' levels of education, the more the wives perceived the division of domestic tasks as egalitarian; the greater was the extent of the husbands' employment, the less the wives perceived the division of domestic tasks as egalitarian. The women's gender-role attitudes also correlated positively with perceived division of domestic and outside tasks: The more liberal were women's attitudes, the more they perceived the division of domestic and outside tasks as egalitarian. The more flexible were the women's work schedules, the more they perceived the division of domestic tasks as egalitarian. However, I did not find any correlation between job flexibility and perceived equality in the division of labor for outside and technical tasks, nor did any of the predictor variables correlate significantly with perceived equality in technical tasks (see Table 3).

Combined Contribution of Predictor Variables to Determining Perceived Equality in the Division of Household Labor

To examine the combined contribution of all predictor variables to determining perceptions of equality in the division of household labor, I conducted stepwise hierarchical regression analyses for each task domain. As mentioned, I did not find differences in the correlation patterns between the various predictor variables and perceived equality in household tasks among Jewish women and Arab Muslim women. Therefore, I conducted only general regressions for women from both sociocultural contexts. However, I examined the impact of sociocultural context by entering it as a background variable in the regression equation.

In Step 1, I entered the women's and spouse's resources (i.e., extent of employment, education level) in addition to sociocultural variables (1 = Arab Muslim, 2 = Jewish). In Step 2, I entered the attitudinal variable (i.e., gender-role attitudes) and work-related variable (i.e., flextime). In Step 3, I entered two interactions: (a) Gender-Role Attitudes \times Sociocultural Context and (b) Flextime \times Sociocultural Context. Through this procedure, I aimed to examine whether gender-role attitudes and flextime have differential impacts on predicting perceived equality in the division of household tasks between Jewish women and Arab Muslim women.

Generally speaking, the predictor variables contributed significantly to explaining the variance in the division of domestic tasks. The predictor variables explained less of the variance in the division of outside tasks and even less of the variance in the division of technical tasks.

Equality in the division of domestic tasks. Taken together, all predictor variables accounted for 41% of the variance in domestic tasks. As Table 4 shows, sociocultural context explained the differences in perceived equality of domestic tasks most significantly. When I entered sociocultural context into Step 1 of the regression, the other variables that had correlated significantly with the outcome variable (perceived division of household tasks) in the bivariate analysis (see Table 3) were no longer significant. Of all the variables that I added to the regression equation in Step 2, only women's gender-role attitudes contributed significantly to explaining the variance in perceived equality in domestic tasks. Women who held more liberal gender-role attitudes perceived the division of household labor in the area of domestic tasks as more egalitarian. The interactions of Sociocultural Context \times Gender-Role Attitudes and Sociocultural Context \times Flextime did not contribute significantly to explaining the division of domestic tasks.

Equality in the division of outside tasks. All predictor variables together explained 26% of the variance in the division of outside tasks (see Table 5). Although the explained variance in this domain was no higher than in the other two domains, the range of variables that explained the division of outside tasks was the most

TABLE 4. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Equality in the Division of Domestic Tasks (*N* = 122)

Variable	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
Step 1					
Sociocultural context	.51***	0.79	0.12	.36***	.36***
Level of education	.06	0.04	0.08		
Extent of employment	.04	0.03	0.11		
Spouse's education	.08	0.09	0.08		
Extent of spouse's employment	.01	0.01	0.01		
Step 2					
Sociocultural context	.43***	0.58	0.16	.39***	.03*
Level of education	.04	0.01	0.08		
Extent of employment	.05	0.04	0.11		
Spouse's education	.06	0.07	0.08		
Extent of spouse's employment	.01	0.01	0.16		
Flextime	.02	0.02	0.05		
Gender-role attitudes	.21*	0.19	0.08		
Step 3					
Sociocultural context	.43***	0.60	0.15	.41***	.02
Level of education	.05	0.05	0.11		
Extent of employment	.05	0.07	0.11		
Spouse's education	.06	0.05	0.08		
Extent of spouse's employment	.01	0.02	0.15		
Flextime	.01	0.02	0.07		
Gender-role attitudes	.20*	0.19	0.08		
Sociocultural Context \times Flextime	.14	0.11	0.08		
Sociocultural Context \times Gender-Role Attitudes	.03	0.10	0.04		

p* < .05. **p* < .001.

diverse. As I had done in the regression for domestic tasks, I entered sociocultural context in Step 1 of the regression equation for outside tasks. The beta coefficient (β) indicated that the Jewish women perceived the division of outside tasks as more egalitarian than did their Arab Muslim counterparts. I also found in Step 1 that level of education was a significant contributor to perceived equality in the division of outside tasks. Women with higher levels of education perceived the division of outside tasks to be more egalitarian than did women with less education. The effect of sociocultural context and level of education remained significant even when I entered additional variables in the next steps.

TABLE 5. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Equality in the Division of Outside Tasks ($N = 122$)

Variable	β	B	$SE\ B$	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1					
Sociocultural context	.23*	0.31	0.13	.16**	.16**
Level of education	.20*	0.19	0.08		
Extent of employment	.09	0.08	0.12		
Spouse's education	-.08	0.04	0.09		
Extent of spouse's employment	.02	0.02	0.11		
Step 2					
Sociocultural context	.28*	0.38	0.17	.24***	.08**
Level of education	.20*	0.21	0.09		
Extent of employment	.10	0.05	0.12		
Spouse's education	-.10	0.06	0.09		
Extent of spouse's employment	.01	0.01	0.16		
Flextime	.28*	0.17	0.08		
Gender-role attitudes	.12	0.12	0.09		
Step 3					
Sociocultural context	.36***	0.40	0.17	.26***	.02
Level of education	.23**	0.12	0.09		
Extent of employment	.03	0.08	0.09		
Spouse's education	-.12	0.09	0.17		
Extent of spouse's employment	.02	0.01	0.08		
Flextime	.25**	0.17	0.08		
Gender-role attitudes	.11	0.10	0.08		
Sociocultural Context \times Flextime	.04	0.03	0.06		
Sociocultural Context \times Gender-Role Attitudes	.13	0.11	0.07		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Among the variables I entered in Step 2, the only one that contributed significantly to explaining the variance was flextime. Women with more flexible work schedules perceived the division of outside tasks as more egalitarian than did women with more rigid work schedules. The interactions of Sociocultural Context \times Gender-Role Attitudes and Sociocultural Context \times Flextime did not contribute significantly to explaining the division of outside tasks.

Equality in the division of technical tasks. I found that, of the three domains I examined, the one with the lowest explained variance was technical tasks: The

variables together explained only 9% of the variance, and none of the individual variables contributed significantly to explaining the variance.

Discussion

My main goal in the study was to examine whether microlevel variables (resources, gender-role attitudes, and time availability) and macrolevel variables (traditional and liberal sociocultural contexts) shape the division of household labor. The sociocultural contexts I examined (Jewish and Arab Muslim) represent two distinct orientations to gender roles. The mainstream Jewish family in Israel is generally considered to be Western, and family patterns resemble those in other industrialized countries (Lavee & Katz, 2003). In contrast, the Israeli Arab population is generally described as being in transition. Although many Arab families have been exposed to processes of modernization and have adopted many Western standards, they have retained traditional values and family patterns (Al-Haj, 1987; Haj-Yahia, 1995).

My findings indicate that sociocultural context plays a major role in the division of household labor (confirming H_1). However, its influence is more complex than I initially expected. As hypothesized, I found that Jewish women have more egalitarian perceptions regarding the division of household labor than do their Arab Muslim counterparts. Even though the Arab Muslim women who participated in the study were educated and employed outside the home, they adhered to traditional norms that are deeply rooted in their society and govern the home sphere (confirming H_2). As a result, they tended to maintain traditional patterns of household labor to a greater extent than did their Jewish counterparts. The impact of sociocultural context was also reflected in the rankings of household tasks, with Arab Muslim participants considering domestic tasks to be the least egalitarian domain. This finding further highlights the traditional gender-role ideology in that sociocultural context. In addition, I found that sociocultural context affects work flexibility. Specifically, the Jewish women perceived their paid work as relatively flexible (confirming H_3). Notably, such arrangements are characteristic of modern time-management practices in Western sociocultural contexts such as Israel but are not as common in Arab Muslim society.

Besides these visible social and cultural differences between Jewish women and Arab Muslim women, the relationships between the three sets of predictor variables (resources, gender-role attitudes, and flextime) and the outcome variable (perceived equality in the division of household labor) followed similar patterns. All of the variables explained only a small percentage of the variance in technical tasks. It is likely that because these tasks usually require technical knowledge and physical strength, people in both societies still consider them predominantly masculine. As for outside and domestic tasks, the finding that equality in these domains correlated significantly with women's level of education and that of their spouses is consistent with the existing literature (e.g., Kulik & Rayyan, 2006).

Evidently, even in traditional societies, education exposes women to egalitarian ideology and ultimately affects the division of labor in their homes. In contrast, extent of employment was not related to equality in the division of household labor. Regardless of the amount of time that women spent working outside of the home, the burden of household responsibility fell squarely on their shoulders (partially confirming H_4).

As expected, liberal gender-role attitudes correlated with equality in the division of household tasks (confirming H_5). Women with liberal gender-role attitudes are able to divide gender roles equally in the homes or adopt views that support such equality. Regarding flextime, I found that, contrary to my expectations, in both sociocultural contexts, women with more flexible jobs had a more egalitarian division of labor in their households (rejecting H_6). Evidently, when women have flexible work schedules, they are better able to organize their time and delegate household tasks to their spouses. Therefore, it seems that flexible job schedules facilitate women's performance of tasks in the home sphere. To better understand the nature of the relationship between flexible job schedules and the division of household labor, future researchers should adopt a broader perspective and examine the extent of husbands' job flexibility as well. The combination of men's and women's flextime work patterns may allow for a more comprehensive examination of the division of household labor in light of the time available theory.

One major finding of the present study relates to the importance of women's education in both societies. Despite the correlative nature of the current study, which does not allow for clear conclusions about causal relations between the variables, one may assume that a woman's level of education affects her lifestyle and family life. Higher education enables women to find flexible work arrangements, which mitigate the conflict between work and home commitments. Furthermore, women with higher education are exposed to ideas about equality and women's rights to a greater degree than are women without higher education. This exposure may encourage them to adopt more liberal views with regard to gender roles. In addition, my findings suggest that educated women tend to have spouses with similar levels of education who may share some of the burden of household responsibility. Beyond the importance of education in the women's own lives, the current findings indicate that it has an impact on other personal and environmental variables that encourage an egalitarian division of household tasks.

In sum, the findings indicate that two dimensions of household tasks—domestic and outside—were related to some of the microlevel variables that I examined in this study and to the macrolevel variable of sociocultural context. However, none of the predictor variables significantly explained the division of technical tasks, probably because those tasks are considered to be distinctly masculine in both sociocultural contexts. Regarding the theories underlying the study, the findings partially support the relative resources theory. As expected, women's education level, but not the extent of their employment, was related to

an egalitarian division of domestic and outside tasks. The findings also partially support the gender-role approach, as women's gender-role attitudes were related to several dimensions of household labor. However, the findings do not support the time available theory. Apparently, in contemporary societies, in which flexible work patterns such as shorter work hours and working at home have become more common among dual-earner families, available time is no longer a relevant factor in the division of household labor. However, other spousal variables such as resources and gender-role attitudes may have become more salient. Moreover, the findings indicate the complex nature of the impact that macrolevel variables such as gender-role ideology have on a given society. Different social norms affect the division of household tasks in each society, but the variables that explain the division of household tasks are similar in both contexts.

It is important to mention some limitations of the study, which provide directions for future research. First, the research sample was small and included only educated women working for pay outside the home. Because most Arab Muslim women are not employed outside the home, future researchers who wish to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the division of household labor in Arab society should examine households in which the husband is the sole provider. Moreover, because I examined the women's perceptions without considering the actual division of labor in their homes, it would be worthwhile for future researchers to include variables that measure the actual division of labor in the homes (e.g., how many hours each spouse devotes to the various types of household tasks).

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