

8. Reproducing gender inequality: The intergenerational transmission of paid and unpaid work patterns

Aim: To investigate to what extent and under which conditions the intergenerational transmission of gendered patterns in paid and unpaid work contributes to gender inequality.

Theoretical background:

Although women's labor force participation has increased over the past decades, women still work fewer hours and earn less income than men. Adding to this gender inequality, is the persistent gendered division of housework and childcare, with women doing the lion's share of unpaid work. One explanation for the persistence of this inequality is that gendered patterns in paid and unpaid work are transmitted from one generation to the next. There is some support for this explanation. Mother's employment during youth has been found to positively affect their daughters' labor market outcomes (McGinn et al., 2019). Mother's employment also positively affects their sons' contributions to housework and the division of unpaid work in the parental home affects people's contribution to household labor later in life (Cunningham, 2001; McGinn et al., 2019). Little is known, however, about the consequences of father's involvement in household labor for his children's paid employment, especially sons' likelihood to work parttime.

Explanations for these similarities between parents and children focus on the transmission of work values, gender-role attitudes and skills, and on role modeling and imitation of behavior. Besides such causal mechanisms, similarity can be the result of parents and children being in comparable circumstances. E.g. mothers and daughters may both be single parents and work out of economic necessity). Some studies on these mediating mechanisms exist.

Studies on moderating mechanisms are very rare, although it is likely that the extent to which socialization and transmission processes are effective depend on family-related and contextual circumstances. One study has shown that the association between mother's and daughter's labor market outcomes is stronger for high SES-families (McGinn et al., 2019). Other, unstudied sources of variation could be migration background, family structure, or regional labor market opportunities. These characteristics likely affect the strength of parental socialization, the possibility of children to follow in their parents' footsteps, and the attractiveness to do so.

This study extends previous work on the role of intergenerational transmission for gender inequality by (a) studying similarity in paid work and unpaid work for fathers and mothers and its explanations, (b) studying other sources of variation in intergenerational transmission besides SES, and (c) testing theoretical explanations for these moderating effects.

Research design:

The main dataset to be used in this study is the LISS panel. This is a rich datasets with retrospective information on the parents (e.g. LISS panel). Additional data collection of retrospective information on the division of household and paid labor by the parents will be part of the study.

Literature:

- Cunningham, M. (2001). Parental influences on the gendered division of housework. *American Sociological Review*, 184-203.
- McGinn, K. L., Ruiz Castro, M., & Lingo, E. L. (2019). Learning from mum: Cross-national evidence linking maternal employment and adult children's outcomes. *Work, Employment and Society*, 33(3), 374-400.

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