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Gender role attitudes and the division of housework in young married couples in northern Vietnam

Thanh Thi Vu

This article investigates the gender role attitudes and domestic division of labour of young couples in northern Vietnam. Based on separate interviews with 30 couples living in rural and urban areas, it explores young people's thoughts about the roles of a wife and a husband and how these translate into their allocation of housework. Analysis of the interviews indicates that the perceptions and expectations of young people remain influenced by traditional gender ideology, in that wives are still considered mainly responsible for housework. However, in practice, gender roles are highly flexible and demonstrate significant mutual support. In addition, the similarities or differences between spouses in terms of gender role attitudes contribute to levels of relative satisfaction regarding the current division of labour in households.

Housework is said to endorse the relationship between femininity and masculinity and create a symbolic sense of gender.[1] Diverse theoretical perspectives have identified a variety of factors that shape the domestic division of labour between men and women, including resource contribution, time availability and the gendered attitudes of spouses.

The relative resource perspective suggests that the resources that partners bring to their relationship influence their involvement in housework.[2] These resources might include income, level of education, and social position/occupational prestige.[3] The allocation of housework is determined through a bargaining process between the spouses,[4] such that the more resources an individual has, the greater power he/she

Thanh Thi Vu is a Doctor at the Institute of Human Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences. Correspondence in connection with this article should be addressed to: Vuthanh0807@gmail.com. I would like to thank Prof. Raelene Wilding (La Trobe University), who supervised my PhD candidature during this research and also helped me revise this article. I appreciate the contribution of Prof. Tran Thi Minh Thi (Institute for Family and Gender Studies) to this article. I am also grateful for the comments and suggestions of this journal's referees and editor which helped improve the article.

1 Marie Evertsson and Magnus Nermo, 'Changing resources and the division of housework: A longitudinal study of Swedish couples', *European Sociological Review* 23, 4 (2007): 456.

2 Suzannne M. Bianchi, Melissa A. Milke, Liana Sayer and John P. Robinson, 'Is anyone doing the housework? Trends in the gender division of household labor', *Social Forces* 79, 1 (2000): 193–4.

3 Evertsson and Nermo, 'Changing resources and the division of housework', p. 456; Beth Anne Shelton and Daphne John, 'The division of household labor', *Annual Review of Sociology* 22 (1996): 304–6.

4 Marie Evertsson, 'Gender ideology and the sharing of housework and child care in Sweden', *Journal of Family Issues* 35, 7 (2014): 929.

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has when negotiating housework allocation.[5] In contrast, the time availability perspective suggests that housework arrangements are associated with each person's time availability,[6] such that partners who have more free time will potentially spend a greater number of hours on housework compared to those who have less free time, irrespective of gender.[7] The gender role perspective instead emphasises the influence of beliefs and attitudes regarding gender roles on the division of housework.[8] Two main ideologies define gender roles. The first is 'traditional', referring to a segregated, unegalitarian structure that considers women as homemakers and caregivers who are responsible for domestic life, and men as the financial supporters and family heads.[9] In this arrangement, there is little incentive to change an unequal division of domestic work because both men and women consider unpaid work to be less important than paid work. The role of men as breadwinners is accorded a higher status and greater appreciation than the corresponding role of women as homemakers.[10] Women who hold traditional attitudes emphasise the paid work of men over the unpaid work of women, and tend not to see women's higher burden of housework as unfair.[11] The second is 'egalitarian', which rejects unequal patterns in gender relations.[12] Some studies in Asian countries (such as Japan, South Korea, China and Taiwan) show the considerable influence of gender role ideology on housework allocation.[13] Nevertheless, studies in Western countries show that, while more traditional attitudes are associated with a less equal division of household labour, more egalitarian attitudes do not always lead to a more equal division of labour.[14] For example, a study of young couples in Sweden indicates that men with more egalitarian ideas of gender roles tend to be more involved in housework compared to other men, and that this contributes to reducing women's time spent on housework. Nevertheless, the

5 Evertsson and Nermo, 'Changing resources and the division of housework', p. 456.
6 Bianchi et al., 'Is anyone doing the housework?', p. 193; Giulia Maria Dotti Sani, 'Men's employment hours and time on domestic chores in European countries', *Journal of Family Issues* 35, 8 (2014): 1028.
7 Malia Voicu, Bogdan Voicu and Kataria Strapcova, 'Housework and gender inequality in European countries', *European Sociological Review* 25, 3 (2009): 366.
8 Arnstein Aassve, Giulia Fuochi and Letizia Mencarini, 'Desperate housework: Relative resources, time availability, economic dependency, and gender ideology across Europe', *Journal of Family Issues* 35, 8 (2014): 1000; Voicu et al., 'Housework and gender inequality', p. 366.
9 Damon Berridge, Roger Penn and Mojtaba Ganjali, 'Changing attitudes to gender roles: A longitudinal analysis of ordinal response data from the British household panel study', *International Sociology* 24, 3 (2009): 347–8; Hee-kang Kim, 'Analysing the gender division of labour: The cases of the United States and South Korea', *Asian Perspective* 33, 2 (2009): 210.
10 Nickie Charles, Charlotte Aull Davies and Chris Harris, *Families in transition: Social change, family formation and kin relationships* (Bristol: Policy, 2008), p. 117.
11 Evertsson, 'Gender ideology', p. 931.
12 Berridge et al., 'Changing attitudes to gender roles', pp. 347–8.
13 Joyce Lai Ting Leong, Sylvia Xiaohua Chen and Michael Harris Bond, 'Housework allocation and gender (in)equality: The Chinese case', in *Psychology of gender through the lens of culture*, ed. Saba Safdar and Natasza Kosakowska-Berezecka (Cham: Springer, 2015), p. 86; Noriko Iwai, 'Division of housework in Japan, South Korea, China and Taiwan', in *Family work and well being in Asia*, ed. Ming-Chang Tsai and Wan-chi Chen (Singapore: Springer, 2017), p. 107.
14 John Knodel, Vu Manh Loi, Rukmalie Jayakody and Vu Tuan Huy, 'Gender roles in the family: Change and stability in Vietnam', *Asian Population Studies* 1, 1 (2005): 71; Shelton and John, 'The division of household labor', p. 306; Bussarawan Teerawichtchainan, John Knodel, Manh Loi Vu and Tuan Huy Vu, 'The gender division of household labor in Vietnam: Cohort trends and regional variations', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 41, 1 (2010): 61.

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egalitarian attitudes of women alone are not associated with increased time spent by men on housework.[15]

The division of household work reflects power in intimate relations,[16] and is one of 'the most persistent forms of gender inequality'.[17] Women in both the West and the East continue to take much more responsibility for household chores than men.[18] In Western countries, there has been a significant shift in attitudes towards a greater emphasis on sharing and equality of domestic labour.[19] However, the practices of gender-based inequality in the domestic division of labour have not changed to the same extent. Historically, many East Asian countries have been influenced by Confucian ideology that considers husbands as 'righteous' and wives as 'obedient'. Asian countries facing 'a dilemma of preserving traditional women's status while responding to the demand of economic development are compelled to modify conservatively their traditional values and norms'.[20] A study by Yue Qian and Liana C. Sayer on the division of labour and gender ideology in China, Taiwan, Japan and Korea shows that women are more likely to hold egalitarian attitudes about gender than men, and that a match between expectations of gender equality and practices of equal housework division helps to enhance marital satisfaction in China and Taiwan.[21] However, gender inequality in the domestic division of labour remains relatively unchallenged. Women in Korea, Japan, and Taiwan spend much more time on housework than do men.[22] Many women in economically developed countries such as Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore have historically left paid employment after marriage and having their first child in order to give their full attention to the family.[23] Recently, there has been an increase in women's participation in paid work in Japan, China, and South Korea, creating conflict between their domestic and employment roles.[24]

As a country 'dominated by Confucian ideology',[25] the gender division of household labour in Vietnam reflects the resilience of traditional family values and ongoing resistance to broader, dramatic transformations.[26] A study by Meejung

15 Evertsson, 'Gender ideology', p. 945.
16 Kathryn J. Lively, Lala Carr Steelman and Brian Powell, 'Equity, emotion, and household division of labor', *Social Psychology Quarterly* 73 (2010): 361.
17 Teerawichtchainan et al., 'The gender division of household labor in Vietnam', p. 57.
18 Graham Allan and Graham Crow, *Families, households and society* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 96; Janeen Baxter, 'The joys and justice of housework', *Sociology* 34, 4 (2000): 625; David Cheal, *Sociology of family life* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 120–24; Margrit Eichler, *Family shifts: Families, policies and gender equality* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press Canada, 1997), pp. 60–61; Yoko Tokuhiro, *Marriage in contemporary Japan* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 81–3.
19 Paul R. Amato, Alan Booth, David R. Johnson and Stacy J. Rogers, *Alone together: How marriage in America is changing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 149–50.
20 Stella Quah, *Families in Asia: Home and kin* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 111.
21 Yue Qian and Liana C. Sayer, 'Division of labor, gender ideology, and marital satisfaction in East Asia', *Journal of Marriage and Family* 78, 2 (2016): 383–400.
22 Kim Young-Mi, 'Dependence on family ties and household division of labor in Korea, Japan and Taiwan', *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 19, 2 (2013): 7–35.
23 Quah, *Families in Asia*, p. 124.
24 Man-Yee Kan, Ekaterina Hertog and Kamila Kolpashnikova, 'Housework share and fertility preference in four East Asian countries in 2006 and 2012', *Demographic Research* 41 (2019): 1021–46.
25 Knodel et al., 'Gender roles in the family', p. 71.
26 Teerawichtchainan et al., 'The gender division of household labor in Vietnam', p. 82.

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Chin on family attitudes and gender role divisions in Vietnam and South Korea shows that patriarchal norms are preserved to a larger extent in Vietnam than in South Korea.[27] In Vietnam, women are considered responsible for social reproduction, including nurturing the family and being in charge of the day-to-day running of the household.[28] The majority of Vietnamese retain traditional notions of gender roles, in which women are thought to be responsible for housework while men are in charge of economic activities and external communication.[29] Women's daily work (such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for children or sick family members) is considered minor, whereas men's work, such as repairing a house, is perceived as a major contribution.[30] Daughters in Vietnam are socialised to fulfil the norms of women's roles and to do more housework compared to sons.[31] Daughters are trained to do housework from an early age.[32] As a result, women's attitudes towards a wife's roles are often more traditional than those of men.[33] Men are also influenced by traditional ideas of gender roles. Young men in Vietnam are influenced by the Confucian structuring of gender relations in which women are expected to be calm, faithful, and resilient, and to perform household duties.[34] The influence of Confucianism makes attitudes toward women's unequal role in the family particularly persistent in Vietnam, with little variation across marital cohorts.[35] Vietnamese women continue to be more responsible for housework than men.[36]

A comparison of three marriage cohorts from the middle to the end of the twentieth century in Vietnam indicates that women are mainly in charge of household chores, with no notable change in the contribution of men to housework.[37] A study by Vu Tien Manh indicates a gender gap in time spent on housework regardless of working status, income level, household size or number of children.[38] Vietnamese

27 Meejung Chin, 'Family attitudes and gender role divisions of married women in contemporary Vietnam and Korea', *International Journal of Human Ecology* 12, 2 (2011): 65–75.

28 Paul Horton and Helle Rydstrom, 'Heterosexual masculinity in contemporary Vietnam: Privileges, pleasures, and protests', *Men and Masculinities* 14, 5 (2011): 542–64.

29 Ministry of Culture Sports and Tourism, General Statistics Office, Institute for Family and Gender Studies, and UNICEF, *Kết quả điều tra gia đình Việt Nam năm 2006* [Nation-wide survey on family in Vietnam 2006] (Hanoi: UNICEF, 2008), p. 75.

30 Jayne Werner, *Gender, household and state in post-revolutionary Vietnam* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), p. 92.

31 Tien Manh Vu, 'Are daughters always the losers in the chore war? Evidence using household data from Vietnam', *Journal of Development Studies* 50, 4 (2014): 520–29.

32 Werner, *Gender, household and state in post-revolutionary Vietnam*, p. 91.

33 Trinh Thai Quang, 'Division of domestic labour in rural Vietnam' (MA thesis, National University of Singapore, 2011), p. 65.

34 Philip Martin, 'The impression of power: Memory, affect and ambivalent masculinities in Vietnam', *International Journal for Masculinity Studies* 12, 3–4 (2017): 258.

35 Rukmalie Jayakody and Pham Thi Thu Phuong, 'Social change and fathering: Change or continuity in Vietnam?', *Journal of Family Issues* 34, 2 (2013): 230–51.

36 Le Thi Thanh Huong, *Ứng xử của người dân vùng đồng bằng sông Hồng trong gia đình* [Behavior in families of residents living in Red River Delta] (Hanoi: Tu dien Bach khoa, 2009), pp. 76–8; Tran Thi Van Anh and Nguyen Huu Minh, *Bình đẳng giới ở Việt Nam* [Gender equality in Vietnam] (Hanoi: Khoa hoc Xa hoi, 2008), pp. 145–56; Trinh Thai Trinh Thai Quang, 'Division of domestic labour in rural Vietnam', p. 48; Knodel et al., 'Gender roles in the family', pp. 76–7; Jayakody and Pham Thi Thu Phuong, 'Social change and fathering', p. 236.

37 Teerawichtchainan et al., 'The gender division of household labor in Vietnam', pp. 69–75.

38 Vu Tien Manh, 'Home appliances and gender gap of time spent on unpaid housework: Evidence using household data from Vietnam', *Singapore Economic Review* 64, 1 (2019): 103.

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women are participating in paid work at higher rates and have become more independent from men. Nevertheless, they remain mainly responsible for housework.[39] Hence, women increasingly bear the double burden of responsibility for both household duties and paid employment.[40] Even when they have high status employment, they are still expected to conform to traditional gender norms.[41] It takes time for women to do daily family tasks such as cooking, cleaning and caring for children, which has an influence on women's paid work.[42] Interestingly, in rural Vietnam, older men are more likely than younger men to be involved in housework. This is explained by older men's breadwinner role becoming less important because their farming activities are increasingly performed by adult children, leaving older men with more time for housework.[43]

For Raewyn Connell, an important buttress of male dominance and expectations of female submission is the sexual division of labour, one that sees women largely responsible for the social production of the household and for childcare. She sees this as a 'patriarchal dividend', one in which men benefit from women's labour in the household.[44] Connell suggests that there are forms of 'hegemonic masculinity' operating in society that configure masculinity as the dominance of men over women and over non-heteronormative versions of masculinity. The other side of hegemonic masculinity is that of a heteronormative femininity constructed around women's subordination to men, which Connell terms 'emphasized femininity'.[45] Culturally constructed forms of 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'emphasized femininity' legitimate both men's greater power in marriage and women's acceptance of this situation. Connell understands this power imbalance as an expression of patriarchy.[46] This article examines how patriarchal power legitimises men's low levels of involvement in domestic tasks and women's greater involvement in chores.

There have been several studies investigating domestic labour division in Vietnam, which usually used quantitative methods for measuring types of chores, and/or the number of hours spent on housework by men and women.[47] Nevertheless, there has been no research exploring couples' negotiations over housework, especially the younger generation, who grew up in a rapidly changing Vietnam.

39 Nguyen Thanh Binh, 'The division of household labor in Vietnamese families at present time', *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 2, 5 (2012): 59–68.

40 Linda J. Yarr, 'Gender and the allocation of time: Impact on the household economy', in *Vietnam women in transition*, ed. Kathleen Barry (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), p. 116.

41 Sidney Ruth Schuler, Hoang Tu Anh, Vu Song Ha, Tran Hung Minh, Bui Thi Thanh Mai and Pham Vu Thien, 'Constructions of gender in Vietnam: In pursuit of the "Three Criteria"', *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 8, 5 (2006): 390.

42 Yarr, 'Gender and the allocation of time', p. 117.

43 Trinh Thai Quang, 'Division of domestic labour', p.101.

44 Raewyn Connell, 'New directions in gender theory, masculinity research, and gender politics', *Journal of Anthropology* 61, 3–4 (1996): 162.

45 Raewyn Connell, *Gender and power: Society, the person and sexual politics* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 186–7.

46 Raewyn Connell, *Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), p. 58.

47 Knodel et al., 'Gender roles in the family', pp. 74–8; Teerawichtchainan et al., 'The gender division of household labor in Vietnam', pp. 66–75; Vu Thi Thanh, 'Bình đẳng giới giữa vợ và chồng trong gia đình nông thôn Việt Nam' [Gender inequality between husbands and wives in rural families of Vietnam], *Gia dinh va Gioi* 1, 19 (2009): 25–30.

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This article contributes to widening our understanding about young couples' negotiations over housework based on qualitative research. In particular, it explores young people's attitudes to the roles of a wife and husband in marriage, and analyses whether their gender attitudes translate into everyday practice and the negotiation of domestic tasks.

Sample and method

This study was conducted in the north of Vietnam, where there is a stronger influence of Confucianism compared to the south.[48] Vietnamese in the north tend to hold more patriarchal gender attitudes than their southern counterparts.[49] Conducting this study in the north helps to better investigate the clash between egalitarian and traditional gender roles in the household division of labour. The study covers both rural and urban households in the Red River Delta, the most densely populated region of Vietnam.[50] Thirty couples were selected — 15 in an urban ward in Hanoi city, and 15 in a rural commune in Thai Binh province. The selection of participants was based on the definitions of 'young' and 'marriage' according to the laws of Vietnam. Marriage is defined as the relationship between a husband and wife satisfying legal conditions for marrying and marriage registration,[51] and youth are those aged from 16 to 30.[52] Thus, the couples selected for this research were those registered as married, and aged up to 30 (when the research was conducted in 2012). Thus, 'young couples' here does not indicate that they are newlyweds. This research focused on specific features of youth associated with their marital experiences. Therefore, the duration of their marriage was analysed as a factor influencing marital experiences of young couples, instead of being used as criteria for selecting participants.

Local officials who managed marriage registration at the research sites were asked to identify couples aged from 18 to 30 in the area. Fifteen couples were randomly selected from the registrar's list at each location (see Table 1). In-depth interviews were conducted with both the wife and the husband in order to identify their practices in negotiating the domestic division of labour. Separate interviews allowed participants to share their inner thoughts without being influenced by the presence of their spouse. Consent forms were given to participants before interviews. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed fully before being imported into NVivo software for analysis. Pseudonyms are used in this article to ensure the anonymity of all informants.

48 Rukmalie Jayakody and Vu Tuan Huy, 'Family change in Vietnam's Red River Delta: From war, to reunification, to Renovation', in *Reconfiguring families in contemporary Vietnam*, ed. Magali Barbieri and Danièle Bélanger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 203–36.

49 See Jayakody and Pham Thi Thu Phuong, 'Social change and fathering', pp. 242–3.

50 General Statistics Office, *Statistical yearbook of Vietnam 2015* (Hanoi: Nxb Thong Ke, 2015), pp. 85–6.

51 Socialist Republic of Vietnam, *Luật Hôn nhân và Gia đình 2000* [The Marriage and Family Law 2000], pp. 1–2.

52 Socialist Republic of Vietnam, *Luật Thanh Niên 2005* [The Youth Law 2005], p. 1.

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Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the participants

	Hanoi		Thai Binh	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Occupation				
Home duties[a]	0	2	0	4
Employed[b]	15	13	6	1
Self-employed[c]	0	0	8	9
Unemployed	0	0	1	1
Educational levels				
Postgraduate	2	5	0	0
University graduate	10	9	3	5
Completed senior high school	3	1	9	6
Completed junior high school	0	0	3	3
Completed primary school	0	0	0	1

Notes: [a]Home duties: implied work within family, mainly chores and childcare. [b]Employed: implied those who had paid-work in formal or informal sectors.
[c]Self-employed: implied those who managed work on their own. These included farming on their land or operating a business or service.

Findings: Similarities in gender role attitudes and the reality

Notably, most of the couples (24) shared similar values in relation to gender roles: there were 14 couples who shared traditional attitudes and 10 couples who held egalitarian attitudes. Couples who shared a similar gender role ideology tended to have a positive experience of negotiating housework.

Both spouses with traditional attitudes

As mentioned, women in Vietnam are generally expected to assume full responsibility for domestic tasks.[53] Meanwhile, traditional gender ideology assigns men the roles of breadwinner and family head. Most of the rural women in this study, all of whom held traditional attitudes to gender roles, were either self-employed or only performed home-based duties, providing them with time for housework. For example, Toan, who was 28 years old and a senior high school graduate, and her husband Chien, who was 29 years old and a junior high school graduate, had been married for six years. Chien was a motorbike repairer and Toan was self-employed, running a grocery store at their home in Thai Binh province. They were living next door to Chien's parents and grandmother. Both of them hold similar views about the roles of a wife and husband, based on traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity. Toan said that the criterion of a good wife was that she would 'look after the everyday life of her husband and children'. Similarly, Chien said that the wife's responsibility was to 'be concerned about the family, husband and children'. While Chien took charge of earning money, Toan was the main person doing the daily domestic chores

53 Teerawichtchainan et al., 'The gender division of household labor in Vietnam', p. 61.

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and caring for their daughter. She was always busy doing numerous chores for her family and for her grandmother-in-law's household. She described her daily routine:

> I sometimes told him that I have never woken up later than 5.30 am in the nearly six years since I married him. I usually wake up at 5 am, then I turn on the water heater because my parents-in-law need warm water in the morning. I prepare hot drinks for my grandmother-in-law. Then I do the cleaning and washing at her house, then for our house. When my children wake up, I feed them and take them to school, then I buy food for my family and for my grandmother-in-law, because we eat separately. Then I prepare meals for my grandmother-in-law and for my family. I pick up my children for lunch at home and take them back to school in the afternoon. When my children come home, I bathe them and prepare dinner. My husband only watches television.

Chien admitted that his wife did most of the housework while he seldom did any, saying it was because he was busy with his work. Chien and Toan's comments reveal their joint expectation that the wife is primarily responsible for housework. Neither expressed concern about whether this division of domestic tasks was fair or not. Both accepted their current division of housework and did not have many arguments about this, though Toan might not have been really happy with it. Comparing her own with other women's workloads helped Toan to accept her own heavy workload. She said: 'I think the work is not too hard, because I see many women have to work harder. I think I'm a woman, so I don't compare whether I do a lot of housework while my husband doesn't.'

The majority of rural women in this research had a relatively low level of education (commonly senior high school) and were unemployed, self-employed or only did home duties. Hence, they had time for housework. On the other hand, most of the urban women were well educated and employed full-time, yet the urban women who held traditional attitudes about women's roles still prioritised home duties over work. For example, Lien (25 years old) was a university graduate and worked as a secretary for an airline company, a job she chose because it enabled her to have more time for the family. She accepted the inequality between men and women in balancing home and work duties, explaining: 'I have never thought that the husband's responsibility is doing the housework. I think that he should be responsible for earning money and be concerned about important issues in the family.' Her husband Cuong (28 years old), a postgraduate lawyer, held similar views about a husband's role. He compared the role of the husband to 'the conductor of an orchestra', whose priority was supporting the family financially, emphasising the importance of being the breadwinner to men's identities.[54] Cuong said that his wife sometimes complained when he worked until 9 pm, and tried to adjust his work habits to spend more time with the family. They did not argue often, however, given their similar ideas about spousal roles. Lien sympathised with her husband. Cuong said that he was not involved in housework except when it was really necessary, because he was too busy with his job. At the time of the interview, they were living with Cuong's parents. Lien noted her mother-in-law's help when she lived with them, saying:

54 See also Sarah Thébaud, 'Masculinity, bargaining, and breadwinning: Understanding men's housework in the cultural context of paid work', *Gender and Society* 24, 1 (2010): 334.

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> We come home late and my mother-in-law has already prepared dinner. I just need to wash the dishes. At the weekends, we clean the house if necessary or ask the parents whether they need us to help with anything.

Living with one's parents/in-laws (it is usually the husband's family) is more common in Vietnam than other Southeast Asian countries.[55] Other studies indicate the significant involvement of the extended family in Vietnam, including parents who do the housework.[56] This parental support allows some women, such as Lien, to avoid both the full burden of housework and the need to negotiate a different arrangement with their husbands. Additionally, the similarities in their views on gender roles promoted their acceptance of their responsibilities — Cuong earning money, and Lien prioritising the family over her job — reducing the opportunity for disagreements about domestic labour, despite Lien's occasional complaints about her husband spending too much time at work.

Both spouses with egalitarian attitudes

The couples where both spouses held egalitarian attitudes regarding gender roles lived in the urban area. Unlike the rural women in Thai Binh, many of the urban women were university graduates and employed full-time. It could be that higher education and living in the city meant greater exposure to non-traditional values that have encouraged urban women to adopt a more egalitarian attitude. These egalitarian attitudes and the time constraints of full-time employment led many urban women to require their husbands to accept a greater share of domestic responsibilities. The sharing of domestic tasks between these spouses usually resulted from numerous negotiations. This was demonstrated by the following couple in Hanoi where the husband (Tu) was a 28-year-old university graduate, and the wife (Huong) was a 29-year-old postgraduate. Both were employed full-time by foreign companies and on good salaries. Although Tu thought that the responsibility of women was to look after the family, he recognised the changes in gender relations compared to the past. Tu said that: 'The men in the past were very patriarchal and they required women to do many things. But a woman today needs her husband to share [the housework] with her.' Huong expected her husband to share domestic responsibilities with her. Describing her idea of a good husband, Huong did not express concern about his money-making capacity, but she did value his sharing of the housework. Huong's egalitarian attitude to gender roles included believing that both wife and husband need to spend time on unpaid and paid work duties. She reflected on the contrast with previous generations, saying:

> My mother had to look after us on her own but she still felt happy. My mother-in-law did so because my father-in-law was busy and seldom at home and he couldn't even take care of her when she was sick, but this didn't matter to her. Now if this happened to me, I would feel very sad and cry.

55 Premchand Dommaraju and JooEan Tan, 'Households in contemporary Southeast Asia', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 45, 4 (2014): 559–80.
56 Knodel et al., 'Gender role in the family', p. 74; Trinh Thai Quang, *Division of domestic labour in rural Vietnam*, p. 8.

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Due to the requirements of their jobs, both Huong and Tu were busy. Their time limitations led both to find ways of balancing work and family duties. Tu and Huong both had to sacrifice some of their work time in order to spend more time on the family. Huong said:

> When I was single, I participated in many activities at work. I sometimes worked until 10 pm. However, at the moment I have to try to complete all my work duties within an eight-hour work day. I know my husband also faces similar problems. It has restricted our career development but I think we need to do so for the family … Now we might have slow career development because we need time for children. He found this restricted his career development, but I think each person needs to make some sacrifices.

Her husband Tu also described facing work and family conflicts. He mentioned that, when their child was born, his mother moved in with them for a few months to help look after the newborn baby and do the housework, considerably reducing their burden. The support of parents who permanently or temporarily live with young couples is quite common in Vietnam. Similar parental support is found in some other Asian countries.[57] Since his mother stopped living with them, Tu has adjusted his working schedule to spend more time on family duties. Tu said:

> When my mother lived with us, I could stay at the office longer and do more study. Now I have to come back earlier and do housework … I have to admit that I am developing my career more slowly because of this investment in the family. There were some companies that offered me jobs with a better salary, but they required me to spend more time at work. I couldn't accept those offers because I wouldn't have enough time for the family.

Both Tu and Huong hold egalitarian attitudes and accept that both spouses have to make sacrifices in their careers in order to have time for the family. Yet, this was not automatic; it was the subject of negotiations during their marriage. Huong said that:

> It took us time, day by day, to negotiate and come to agreements. For example, if I told him that I had to work at the weekend, so he would help me look after the baby. Conversely, if he was busy with his project, he would tell me and I might hire my neighbour to care for the baby.

Alicia Cast and Sharon Bird also found that egalitarian couples work hard to 'live by their egalitarian beliefs about balancing work and family responsibilities more equally'.[58] Tu became involved in many domestic chores and looking after their child, and though he sometimes felt dissatisfied about the impact on his career, he understood that each person had to make sacrifices and there should be fairness in the division of housework. Tu and Huong did not have a fixed agreement for

57 See Stevi Jackson, Petula Sik Ying Ho and Jin Nye Na, 'Reshaping tradition? Women negotiating the boundaries of tradition and modernity in Hong Kong and British families', *Sociological Review 61* (2013): 667–87; Yue Qian and Sayer, 'Division of labor', pp. 390–94.

58 Alicia D. Cast and Sharon R. Bird, 'Participation in household and paid labor: Effects on perceptions of role-taking ability', *Social Psychology Quarterly* 68, 2 (2005): 155.

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chore division. Instead, they negotiated domestic tasks depending on changing circumstances, including before and after having children, and when his mother's support with housework was no longer available. Although arguments over housework were sometimes unavoidable, they both considered task-sharing reasonable and acceptable, and agreed they both needed to allocate their limited time for home and work duties.

Another example of egalitarian attitudes and practices in allocating chores is provided by Thu (25 years old) and her husband Tung (29 years old). Thu was a postgraduate and university lecturer in Hanoi. Thu said her idea of a good husband was influenced by her father, who did everything for the family and shared domestic responsibilities with his wife; Thu wished to have a husband as good as her father. On the other hand, her husband, Tung (a university graduate working as a manager's assistant for a foreign company) considered a good wife to be one who cared for her spousal relationship in everyday life in simple ways, such as preparing a dinner.

Before marrying, Thu and Tung had explicit negotiations over their housework roles and even had a pre-nuptial written agreement about the future division of domestic tasks. The agreement stated, for example, that Thu would be responsible for cooking and Tung would be in charge of washing the dishes. Thu had clear requirements for equality in her marriage, and explained: 'Any organisation needs to have principles, and the family does too. Although they can be flexible, you still need to have specific rules.' Her husband accepted what Thu had written in the agreement. He said:

> I agreed with what she wrote in the agreement about task division in the family such as cooking, cleaning, and washing in order to make her happy. I didn't think about it seriously. It's just a way to help us exchange our ideas about the role of each person. I think the agreement isn't important, but the important thing is that the couple actively helps each other.

Tung claimed he did housework because of his willingness to share household chores with his wife rather than because of the written agreement. He did the agreed housework because he wanted to help and make his wife happy. Nevertheless, this changed after they had a baby and hired a home-helper to ease the domestic burden. They still shared the home duties with each other as much as possible and Thu felt satisfied with their arrangement, feeling that she had found a good husband. Thu said that:

> It had been agreed that I would cook and he would wash the dishes. After marrying, we did housework according to the written agreement established between us beforehand. Sometimes I knew that he was tired after work and I suggested he could take a rest after dinner, but he still wanted to wash the dishes by himself … Now I spend most of my time looking after the baby, so he has to cook. Housework isn't hard but it's important that the spouses share it with each other in a way that makes both of them feel comfortable.

The domestic division of labour for couples with similar gender attitudes (traditional or egalitarian) showed that a shared understanding of roles facilitated negotiation over housework. Regardless of whether housework division was unequal (as seen in the

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traditional couples) or equal (as seen in the egalitarian couples), they found the workloads suitable and acceptable.

Differences in gender role attitudes and everyday negotiations

There are two types of couples in the sample who hold differing attitudes to gender roles. The first is typified by four couples, all living in Thai Binh province, in which the women hold traditional ideas and the men hold egalitarian ideas of gender roles in marriage. The second are two urban couples, in which the wives want an egalitarian relationship, while their husbands hold traditional ideas of gender roles. In all of these relationships, husbands and wives shared responsibility for domestic tasks, to different degrees, though this was sometimes achieved following disagreements and explicit negotiation.

Of the rural couples with differing views on gender roles, the wives were in full-time employment with less time for the family, even though they held traditional views on a woman's domestic role. Despite both women having limited time for housework, the homes were managed well due to their husbands, who were open-minded towards gender roles and the sharing of household responsibilities. It appeared that men's egalitarian attitudes significantly encouraged their involvement in housework.[59] The case of Manh and Doan illustrate this.

Manh (30 years old) and her husband Doan (27 years old) had been married for two years. Doan (a university graduate) was employed full-time as a commune official and Manh (a senior high school graduate) had casual work as a driver. Their gender attitudes differed. Doan appeared to be traditional, saying that:

> A wife should look after unimportant things in everyday life, like daily meals and caring for the baby, while a husband worries about important issues, because he is considered to have more ability and can manage it better than his wife can.

On the other hand, her husband tended to be more egalitarian. Unlike most rural men, Manh emphasised the need for sharing and mutual support. He thought a good husband cared for his wife and children, and also shared responsibilities with and helped his wife. He found no distinctions between a wife and husband's home duties, saying that: 'Both wife and husband should be concerned about issues in the family and both of them need to participate in domestic tasks.'

Doan went out to work everyday, which gave her little time for housework. On the other hand, her husband's time was more flexible. He therefore did a lot of the domestic chores, including looking after the baby, cooking and cleaning. Sometimes, when he was busy with housework while his wife was at work, his parents-in-law would help out. Doan was very satisfied with her husband's participation in housework. Their relationship appeared to be egalitarian. Doan said about their shared contributions to housework:

> At the moment I have go to work while my husband has more time at home, so he does the majority of the housework. I'm satisfied with him because now he's the main person

59 Also see Evertsson, 'Gender ideology', p. 939.

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> looking after the baby. When I go to work, he usually cooks and looks after the baby, so there is little left to do when I come home.

Another couple, Tien (22 years old) and his wife Phuong (20 years old) also lived in Thai Binh. Both were senior high school graduates. Tien was self-employed, managing the family's small duck farm next door. Hence he had more time at home, while his wife was attending daily hairdresser training. Phuong held traditional ideas about a husband's role as financially supporting the family. On the other hand, Tien considered it his responsibility as a good husband to do everything he could to ensure his wife was happy and not overworked. Again, it is evident that the family context influences the perceptions that young couples hold regarding gender roles. Tien's image of a good husband came from his image of his father. He said that:

> I'm quite a good husband, but I think my father was a better husband because he could do everything while my mom went out for a few days. My father also did everything, so my mother had time for a rest.

At the time of the interview, Tien and his wife were living with his parents. Tien did most of the housework with his mother's help, because his wife usually came home late from work. He believed his participation in housework was appropriate for their circumstances, because his wife would be tired after working all day.

The above couple analyses show that husbands with egalitarian ideas of gender roles contribute significantly to housework. Rather than relying on traditional gendered roles in the division of labour, these couples shared responsibilities according to their circumstances and schedules. The mutual support and contribution to housework of these rural couples in Thai Binh resulted in both the men and their wives being satisfied with the status quo.

The other type of couples (all in Hanoi) who had differing gender attitudes were those in which only the wives had egalitarian attitudes. This group was subject to more conflict than any of the other types of couples. The reality of everyday household responsibility allocation sometimes did not meet their expectations and perception of gender roles, and as such this influenced their marital satisfaction. An example is the case of a couple in Hanoi, Kim (29 years old) and is wife Nga (30 years old). Both are postgraduates who worked as university lecturers in Hanoi. Kim was born and grew up in the countryside, but had moved to Hanoi to study in 2000 and then settled down. He said that his own family was a Confucian one, which had a significant influence on his thinking. Kim valued the traditional family model in which a woman puts her husband and family first, and her own needs last. He said:

> I like the traditional model of a wife who has good virtues and knows how to sacrifice herself and to support her husband. A good wife needs to balance family life. She should be a stable support who puts her husband's mind at rest so he can concentrate on his work … I prefer a woman who resigns herself to her lot in life. I don't mean that she should do so in order for me to restrain her, but I want her to be able to endure the difficulties that occur in life and not make her husband worry.

Although Kim's opinion of gender roles appeared to be hierarchical and patriarchal, what he called a 'traditional model', this did not rigidly translate into how he acted at

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home, because of their circumstances. In the past they had hired a home-help and his mother had temporarily moved in with them for a few months when they had a baby. Since they couldn't afford to continue hiring a home-help and his mother no longer lived with them, Nga then had to do all of the housework and baby care. Kim said that his wife woke up early, went to the market, cooked and cleaned while he fed the children. He would also clean, tidy up and look after the children.

Yet, even though Nga recognised that her husband often contributed to the household tasks, she still felt that the division of labour was not fair, and sometimes felt dissatisfied with her husband's involvement, saying:

> Although my husband often gets involved in the housework, sometimes I feel dissatisfied, I mean I expected more than that … If my husband had more participation in housework, I would have more devotion for the family. But, if my husband did nothing, I wouldn't want to do anything, either.

Kim understood that his wife expected him to do more at home than he did. Nga, in Kim's opinion is 'so romantic that she wished to have a perfect man like in films'. He felt that he did a lot of housework, but they could not always agree with each other on dividing the chores. They each rejected the identity that their spouse conceptualised for the other. Kim provided an example of their negotiation of gender identity:

> She thought that men had to do something, but I didn't think so. For example, she thought men had to clean the toilet, but I said women should do it. She didn't agree with me and she left the toilet uncleaned for a long time until it was so dirty I couldn't suffer it any longer, then I had to clean it. I didn't think men had to clean the toilet. Instead, I think it was a woman's duty, but I did it anyway and I didn't want to argue with her. Doing so doesn't mean that I was defeated by her, but I thought I would be respected when I did so.

Although Kim had traditional attitudes regarding gender roles in a marriage, what he did in reality sometimes differed from his perceived identity. In this case, Kim considered himself, as a man, exempt from cleaning the toilet, which he regarded as a wife's duty. Nevertheless, Kim did clean the toilet in the end.

Nga, on her part, realised that her demands on her husband might be excessive, especially after comparing Kim with her friends' husbands. She said:

> Some of my friends felt helpless and some of them said they didn't understand why they had married their husbands. This is because they didn't do their share of the housework as they expected. When I heard my friends' stories, I realised that my husband was still the 'number one' because he was better than other husbands. After that I knew maybe I had too many requirements of my husband and I changed.

Similar to Tu, discussed earlier, Kim was dissatisfied with having to do too much housework because it conflicted with his work. This was quite a common feeling amongst male participants of this study in Hanoi who had full-time paid jobs. Still in the initial stages of their careers, they felt that they ought to invest considerable time and effort in their work. They resented doing the housework, even if they recognised the fairness of sharing domestic responsibilities. Kim said:

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> I think I did too much housework and I wasn't satisfied myself about this, because it affected my work and long term development … I don't want to spend too much time on housework, but I still have to do so because we need to sacrifice something to get another thing. My wife wants me to develop my career while she also wants me to look after the family. The most important thing for a woman is knowing how to sacrifice herself for our common future but my wife didn't understand this when I told her.

He also provided an example of the conflict between work and family duties he faced:

> Yesterday my bosses invited me to a dinner but I refused. I think it was a good chance for strengthening my relationship with my bosses and enhancing my social networks. The bosses used to invite me often but I had to refuse, even though I regretted this … I had to come home to help my wife because she could be struggling to look after two children. I need to balance work and family duties.

It can be seen that Kim held traditional attitudes and expectations regarding the roles of a wife and a husband. Nevertheless, these were not translated into his actual behaviour at home. Their living circumstances required him to change. He still tried to balance his work and family, and spent a bit of time doing housework. As a result, in spite of his attitudes and preferences, by becoming increasingly involved in doing housework, he nevertheless made their relationship more egalitarian.

Another case is Thanh (27 years old) and Trung (29 years old) in Hanoi. Thanh was a university graduate and worked as a hospital nurse, and Trung, a university graduate working for a government department. After marrying, they moved in with Thanh's parents. Although the husband was patriarchal, their living arrangement was matrilocal because they couldn't afford to buy a house in Hanoi. The wife's parents helped them to look after their children. Trung held traditional attitudes towards gender roles, which valued the role of the husband as directing the family:

> An old male friend used to tell me before I married that the first six months of marriage would decide my life. He said marriage was like a boat and advised that if I became a captain in the first six months, I would be the captain for the rest of my life. By contrast, if I became a normal sailor instead of the captain, I could only be a sailor until the end of my life. When I married, I soon told my wife that I would be a captain and she would be a normal sailor. When there was a storm I would maintain the position of being captain to control our boat and she shouldn't intervene in my work, because it might cause disagreement.

He suggested his wife should be responsible for caring for the family, including looking after their children and elders, while he was responsible for external relationships and important family issues, for example, making economic decisions. Thanh shared similar opinions of a wife's roles, but wanted a more egalitarian relationship in which spouses did family duties together. She said:

> I agreed that he should look after the external relationships while I cared about the family relationships. But I didn't mean that he should give me a bunch of money and then I take full care of the relationships. I wanted both of us to do it together.

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Thanh explained that after many negotiations during the first months of their marriage, finally, her husband was persuaded and they agreed that both had certain responsibilities in caring for the family. However, this couple experienced difficulties in agreeing on how to manage daily domestic chores. Trung described his relatively patriarchal views on domestic work:

> If I had time, I would do other work rather than housework, because I think I would be in charge of doing the important things. She can't do the important things as well as I do, so she's responsible for cooking, cleaning, looking after the baby. While she does these chores, I do other things … I think our division now is suitable because of my time limitations and because I need to focus on earning a living.

However, Thanh was unhappy with her husband's contribution, saying:

> When he comes home, he spends too little time holding the baby. I don't agree with this. When he is tired, I suggest he goes to bed, but actually I wish he would show more concern for his wife and son … Some women at my workplace told me that their husbands looked after the children more carefully than she did, but my husband doesn't. I told him about this, but he said that even if their husbands did that, he does other things. I'm not satisfied with this, but then I tell myself that he is busy working for our future.

Trung's refusal to share housework led Thanh to think he was not a good husband. Trung understood his wife's feelings, but also felt unhappy with his wife for comparing him to her colleagues' husbands. Although Trung and Thanh held different attitudes and expectations about gender roles, their domestic duties were managed well due to the considerable support of her parents and younger sister, who were living in the same household. They helped with both the housework and looking after the baby. As a result, Thanh did not have to do excessive housework despite the lack of her husband's support.

Conclusion

Traditional ideas of gender roles appear to be significant and remain embedded in many young Vietnamese couples. Ideas about a good husband usually reflect traditional (Confucian) notions of masculinity that focus on the role of the husband as leader of the family. On the other hand, ideas of a good wife tend to be associated with traditional perceptions of femininity that expect a woman to sacrifice herself for the well-being of her family and be responsible for all the housework and childcare. Nevertheless, many young people also value the sharing of domestic responsibility between spouses. The similarities or differences in gender role ideas between spouses, whether traditional or egalitarian, have a significant impact on their negotiation of and satisfaction with the domestic division of labour.

The urban couples who shared values of egalitarianism in this study explicitly negotiated the division of labour either before or during their marriage. These wives and husbands have considerable engagement in doing housework because they recognised domestic tasks as the responsibility of both the wife and husband, and both were actively involved in housework. On the other hand, the perceptions of gender roles of the rural participants were more commonly influenced by

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traditional ideas. They tended to think and follow a traditional model of household division of labour with the husband performing the role as breadwinner and the wife as the home-maker. The wives and husbands maintained their roles and had few arguments about organising their home duties. Despite an unequal division of housework, in which the wives were usually in charge of the majority of chores, these couples usually found their division of labour acceptable. Consistent with the suggestion of Anders Barstad about the association between the sense of fairness and gender role ideology,[60] the couples who shared traditional gender attitudes did not consider the unequal division of housework unfair, but rather perceived it as acceptable or reasonable. Because the spouses shared traditional ideas, they maintained their roles and had few arguments over home duties.

A husband's gender role ideology significantly influenced the level of equality in the division of labour between the spouses. When the husband held an egalitarian attitude, regardless of whether his wife shared his view, the division of housework became more equal and the wife tended to be satisfied with the arrangement. This is consistent with findings in Leah Ruppanner's study, suggesting that couples had fewer conflicts when men had significant involvement in housework.[61] However, when husbands held a traditional gender attitude, the division of labour in the marriage appeared to be unequal. In these cases, the satisfaction with or conflict over housework division seemed to depend on the gender ideology of the wife. The negotiation of domestic tasks became complicated when spouses had different perceptions of gender roles. When women (commonly in the rural area) accepted their husband's thinking and involvement in housework, they were satisfied with the housework division. Nevertheless, women (usually in the urban area) who supported an egalitarian attitude tended to be dissatisfied with an unequal division of labour and required more involvement from their husbands in housework. They asserted their own preferences, in particular, a rejection of traditional housework roles in favour of egalitarian sharing and experienced many disagreements in negotiating home duties. Marie Evertsson suggests that women with egalitarian attitudes might be unable to encourage men to be more involved in housework.[62] This reflects a power differential between men and women regardless of whether a relationship is egalitarian.

This analysis of marital housework practices reveals that choosing to follow either a traditional model or an egalitarian model depends not only on participants' ideas about gender roles but also their life circumstances. That is, couples do not always follow fixed models. In some cases, despite valuing traditional ideas of gender roles, participants conducted relatively egalitarian divisions of housework in practice. This arose from other factors influencing the division of housework, for example, the couples' time availability due to employment.[63]

60 Anders Barstad, 'Equality is bliss? Relationship quality and the gender division of household labor', *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 35, 7 (2014): 975.

61 Leah Ruppanner, 'Conflict and housework: Does country context matter?', *European Sociological Review* 26, 5 (2010): 562–5.

62 Evertsson, 'Gender ideology', pp. 939–40.

63 See also Makiko Fuwa, 'Macro-level gender inequality and the division of household labor in 22 countries', *American Sociological Review* 69 (2004): 760–3; Shelton and John, 'The division of household labor', pp. 307–8; Teerawichtchainan et al., 'The gender division of household labor in Vietnam', pp. 66–9.

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In this research, most of the rural female participants only had a junior or senior high school education. Most could not find skilled employment that was well paid. They were engaged in home duties (4 of 15 women) or self-employment in small shops in or close to home, apart from farming (9 of 15 women). Because of unemployment or self-employment, many rural wives had time for housework while their husbands worked to financially support the family. This is consistent with a study in Vietnam by Bussarawan Teerawichtchainan et al., which indicates that spouses with the most resources do the least housework.[64] This can be explained by the relative resource perspective, according to which the resources of each partner (for example, employment, income, education) are associated with their degree of involvement in housework.[65]

On the other hand, in the city, both men and women were usually highly educated and in full-time employment. Some women in Hanoi expressed more egalitarian attitudes and expectations of a more equal relationship than did the rural women, but the urban women faced time limitations as a result of being employed full-time. Vietnam still lacks policies and regulations at workplaces to support women who were employed and had to care for their families and children. These women therefore needed to seek more contributions to domestic tasks from their husbands. In addition, cultural and social contexts in the city might lead women to be more exposed to egalitarian values, whereas rural women tended to be more influenced by conventional and hierarchical norms and values. When their husbands did less housework than they expected, some urban women felt dissatisfied. For these women, it was more important to fulfil spousal expectations than workloads. As in earlier analyses, some urban husbands did do some housework, but their wives were not satisfied because they expected more. This is the opposite of the situation for some rural women, who carried the full burden of housework, but felt satisfied because they saw it as a wife's duty and did not expect a man to do the chores.

It seems that the degree of men's participation in housework did not necessarily translate into women's dissatisfaction with their marriage. However, the crucial variable here was a woman's own expectations of her role as wife, and in particular, her acceptance of housework as part of this role. When both husband and wife believed that the wife was solely responsible for domestic tasks, then Connell's 'patriarchal dividend' was of little concern, and both spouses expressed satisfaction with their marital housework arrangements. Many women accepted a version of femininity closely 'constituted by women's relationship with the domestic'.[66] Dissatisfaction became an issue when spouses held different perceptions about women's roles, most notably when a wife expected a more egalitarian sharing of the chores while the husband ascribed to a more traditional gendered division of labour. These couples usually experienced difficulties in negotiating housework. Nevertheless, this form of femininity, one that sought to weaken women's association within the domestic sphere, was not as common as the women's 'emphasized femininity'.

64 Teerawichtchainan et al, 'The gender division of household labor in Vietnam', pp. 66–75.
65 Ruppanner, 'Conflict and housework', pp. 558–9.
66 Raewyn Connell, 'A really good husband: Work/life balance, gender equity and social change', *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 40, 3 (2005): 371.

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Equity may take a backseat to what is considered reasonable or acceptable in housework division. Unequal division, as indicated earlier, may be accepted with non-traditional gender roles, or it may be accepted or rejected depending on the expectations of women who compare their relationships to others. A distributive perspective indicates that comparisons can be a source of perceived unfairness.[67] Studies also indicate an association between a sense of fairness and satisfaction with the division of housework among young Vietnamese couples. The comparison could be made 'within-gender' (for example, compare housework done by wives with what is done by other women, or compare housework done by husbands with that done by other men) or 'between-gender' (for example, women compare the amount of housework done by themselves with that done by their husbands).[68] In this research, men seldom did a referent comparison while some women did make a comparison within gender. Some women compared the amount of housework they did with that done by their mothers, and sometimes compared the amount of housework done by their husbands with that done by other husbands. These helped to improve women's acceptance or satisfaction with their own burden and their husbands' participation in doing housework.

Some studies indicate that many individuals carry double burdens of job demands and household responsibilities simultaneously, and job demands are said to increase an individual's work/family conflicts.[69] In this study, some urban couples negotiated the conflicts of balancing work and home duties arising from their demanding full-time jobs. Although both wives and husbands in Hanoi were usually employed full-time, more men than women reported work/family conflicts. This could be because men found it difficult to forego career development while balancing domestic duties, while women had various strategies to deal with this, for example, they gave careful consideration when choosing a job or accepted a delay to their career development for a few years until their children were older, thus making more time available. The assumptions about a good woman as someone who puts her family first might lead women to voluntarily devote themselves to the family instead of their own career. Hence, young women reported facing less stress in balancing work and family compared to men. On the other hand, some men face significant conflicts because they want to invest in their career development, but they have to fulfil household responsibilities at the same time. While men in the rural areas appeared to be satisfied with their involvement in housework, whether considerable or minor, many men in Hanoi believed doing their share of the housework hampered their careers. These urban men were usually employed full-time and in the earlier stages of developing their careers. They needed concentration and time investment in their work. This made balancing home and work duties difficult. Some of them accepted their share

67 Ruppanner, 'Conflict and housework', p. 558.

68 Amy J. Himsel and Wendy A. Goldberg, 'Social comparisons and satisfaction with the division of housework: Implications for men's and women's role strain', *Journal of Family Issues* 24 (2003): 854–9; Linda Thompson, 'Family work: Women's sense of fairness', *Journal of Family Issues* 12 (1991): 189–90.

69 *Heejung Chung*, 'Work–family conflict across 28 European countries: A multi-level approach', in *Work-life balance in Europe*, ed. Sonja Drobnic and Ana M. Guillén (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 42.

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of the housework even though they were not satisfied with the arrangement. These couples usually had to negotiate each individual's responsibilities in the marriage. During the process of negotiation, husbands with egalitarian attitudes tended to have less disagreements with their spouses than those holding traditional beliefs.

Studies in Vietnam indicate the considerable involvement of other people (such as parents) in housework, which reduces the burden of domestic labour for young women.[70] In this research, ten couples in Hanoi and nine couples in Thai Binh lived with or next to their parents, who provided the young couples with in-house support. Similar domestic and familial support is found in some other Asian countries, for example, in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Korea and Japan.[71] Parental support considerably contributes to reducing the burden of housework and subsequent disagreements over the organising of family life.

70 Knodel et al., 'Gender role in the family', pp. 74–5; Vu Thi Thanh, 'Gender inequality', pp. 25–9.
71 Stevi Jackson et al., 'Reshaping tradition? Women negotiating the boundaries of tradition and modernity in Hong Kong and British families', *Sociological Review* 61(2013): 667–8; Mohamad Maliki Osman, 'Muslim divorces in Singapore: Social support and "rocky" marriages', in *(Un)tying the knot: Ideal and reality in Asian marriage*, ed. Gavin W. Jones and Kamalini Ramdas (Singapore: Asia Research Institute, 2004), p. 136; Kim Young-Mi, 'Dependence on family ties', pp. 7–35.

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