

# Division of household labour as a process

*Hans-Peter Blossfeld, Daniela Grunow, Annika Jabsen, Harald Rost, Marina Rupp, Florian Schulz*

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In this project, we examine the process of the division of household labour in the context of developments in intimate relationships and family dynamics. Our research is based on theories regarding the choices of action interdependent actors make in given contexts. By employing this approach, we attempt to identify the scope and the characteristics of gendered activities in a longitudinal perspective. We also try to decipher the dynamics of decision-making processes associated with these activities by means of qualitative analysis.

## Project goals

- Longitudinal description of changes in the scope and segregation of household chores and care provision in the course of the relationship and family dynamics
- Dynamic analysis and further improvement of theories that help explaining the trajectories in the biographies of both the intimate relationship and the family
- Description and analysis of the household division of labour in couples with different resource combinations or in different biographical phases
- Development of new theory-based quantitative and qualitative tools for longitudinal research on the household division of labour as prescribed by the test panel of the DFG Priority Programme 1161

## Methodology

- Utilisation of longitudinal data sets – the German Socio-economic Panel, the Bamberg Panel of Married Couples, the Bamberg Panel of Cohabitation – for a dynamic analysis of household division of labour
- Mapping decision-making processes regarding the division of labour in the household by means of conducting a longitudinal survey that includes 22 (married) couples before and after the birth of their first child
- Collection of time-budget data by time diaries and survey questions on time use in the scope of the PAIRFAM project

## Selected findings

- Resources that are regarded as being central for the process of the division of labour in the household according to economic theories (education, employment, income) seem to have less impact than family images, gender-specific norms and role expectations.
- Inertia effects, i.e., the process of habituation to certain arrangements among the couple, largely influence the trajectory of the division of labour in the household.
- The division of labour shifts towards more traditional patterns in the course of an intimate relationship or marriage. Household chores, like cleaning and doing the laundry, are taken up by the women to an ever increasing extent.
- This process of (re-)traditionalisation is often reinforced by certain biographical events, especially by the transition to parenthood.