

*Reorganizations of Gendered Labor During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Review and Suggestions for Further Research**

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Across a range of countries, analysts have found that adaptations to the COVID-19 pandemic often exacerbated previously existing labor inequalities between men and women in formal employment markets and households. This has been especially true for mothers with children in their households. Drawing on decades of sociological and feminist scholarship on labor, we suggest the following three strategies to strengthen ongoing research concerning pandemic-induced reorganizations of gendered labor. First, ongoing research should expand considerations of gendered labor to account for more types of work and workers. Second, initial findings should be extended through the continued utilization of diverse methodologies to better account for the ambivalent experiences and meanings associated with emergent reorganizations of gendered work during the pandemic. Finally, ongoing research should pursue intersectional analyses of gendered labor that are sensitive to the complex dynamics of place and time. By expanding and strengthening considerations of gendered labor in these manners, ongoing analyses could generate more comprehensive, precise findings that better guide policy interventions meant to address the gendered inequities being sharpened by the pandemic. Foundational theoretical understandings of gendered labor and its associated inequalities could also be extended.

Introduction

Reorganizations of gendered divisions of labor in paid employment markets and households in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have received substantial public and academic attention. Paralleling responses to previous socioecological disasters and disruptions (Leap 2019; Moreno and Shaw 2018), opportunities to undo gendered inequalities have been realized in ambivalent manners. Women in charge of prominent governmental institutions across the globe mounted especially effective responses to the pandemic while presenting challenges to traditional masculine leadership styles (Cherneski 2020). Some households reworked their divisions of labor to be more equitable (Carlson and Petts 2021; Hennekam and Shymko 2020), and (un)paid care work associated with women received increased public recognition (Bahn, Cohen, and van der

Meulen 2020; Thomason and Macias-Alonso 2020). However, if the gender revolution in (un)paid labor stalled in the 2000s (Bianchi 2009; England and Levine 2020), evidence generally suggests the early stages of the pandemic reversed the revolution—especially for women living in heterosexual households with children. The following three findings are notable.

- 1 Women, and mothers especially, exited paid labor markets at higher rates than men.
- 2 Because women increased the amount of time they spent on physical, emotional, and cognitive labor associated with their households, a gendered gap in household labor was maintained in gender-mixed households even though men sometimes increased the time they dedicated to household labor.
- 3 Women, and mothers especially, were particularly likely to have their physical and mental health negatively impacted by reorganizations of (un)paid labor.

After reviewing this research, we draw from decades of sociological and feminist scholarship to suggest three avenues for continued research into pandemic-induced reorganizations of gendered labor. We argue that an expansion and extension of considerations of gendered labor is required. By expansion, we mean to emphasize the need for analyses that consider more types of work and workers. By extension, we mean to stress the need to utilize methodological approaches that bolster initial findings by better accounting for the ambivalent, heterogeneous meanings and experiences of those laboring. We also argue that a greater focus on place-specific, intersecting inequalities would enable a more comprehensive, precise assessment of how gendered divisions of labor and their associated inequalities continue to be reorganized in response to an evolving pandemic.

It is especially important to pursue these suggested avenues for ongoing research if we hope to generate findings that can inform policies meant to address inequitable divisions of labor being exacerbated by the pandemic (Bahn et al. 2020; McLaren, Wong, and Nguyen 2020). The scope and severity of disruptions to households, communities, and societies precipitated by COVID-19 are undoubtedly exceptional, but these disruptions also provide openings to assess and extend more general theoretical understandings of how gendered labor and its associated inequities are reproduced, reorganized, and subverted. By weaving foundational works on gendered labor throughout this review, we highlight this potential.

Gendered Labor and the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Summary of Initial Findings

Missed Opportunities: Maintaining Gendered Inequalities in Paid and Unpaid Labor

Rapid increases in the number of men and women working from home at the outset of the pandemic seemed to present the potential to undo gendered divisions of labor disadvantaging women (Alon, Doepke, and Olmstead-Rumsey 2020a; Bahn et al. 2020; Craig 2020; Craig and Churchill 2021a). Indeed, some women in heterosexual households reported becoming more aware of and willing to challenge unequal labor arrangements within their homes during the pandemic (Hennekam and Shymko 2020; Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir 2021). Heterosexual married men working from home in the United States also regularly increased the time they dedicated to unpaid domestic labor (Carolan 2021; Dunatchik et al. 2021). Nevertheless, research from a variety of contexts indicates that gendered divisions of labor were generally reorganized in manners that altered how men and women worked while still maintaining patriarchal gender relations.

Compared to men, women in a range of countries were more likely to be laid off, fired, or have their paid work hours reduced because they were concentrated in service occupations directly impacted by COVID-related mandates and shifts in consumption patterns (Alon et al. 2020a; Dang and Viet Nguyen 2021; Raile et al. 2021; Sarker 2021; Whiley and Sayer 2021). Beyond women's concentration in service occupations, and echoing research that has consistently shown women's participation in paid labor markets is associated with the gendered divisions of labor within their households (Collins 2019; Davis and Greenstein 2020; Norman 2020; Raley and Bianchi 2012; Ruppanner 2020; Shandy and Moe 2009), gendered labor market outcomes that emerged in response to the pandemic were closely coupled with gendered divisions of labor in households. Studies across a range of countries show that women were much more likely than men to reduce their participation in paid labor markets in order to care for children who were now spending more time in their households following school and childcare facility closures (Adams-Prassl, Boneva, and Golin 2020; Albanesi and Kim 2021; Alon, Doepke, and Olmstead-Rumsey 2020b; Alon et al. 2021; Casale and Posel 2021; Collins, Landivar et al. 2021; Collins, Ruppanner et al. 2021; Fuller and Qian 2021; Ham 2021; Hipp and Bünning 2021; Kristal and Yaish 2020; Landivar, Ruppanner, and Scarborough 2020; Reichelt and Makovi 2021; Zamarro and Prados 2021).

Paralleling research that has repeatedly illustrated women with children experience a variety of "motherhood penalties" in paid labor markets (Correll

and Benard 2007; Ishizuka 2021; Kleven, Landais, Posch et al. 2019; Kleven and Landais 2019), the number and ages of children in households were especially important to whether women exited paid labor markets. Married heterosexual women with children in their households in the United States were more likely to become unemployed at the onset of the pandemic than were comparable women without children (Landivar et al. 2020). In contrast to heterosexual women with children, heterosexual men with children in the United States were no more likely to exit the workforce at the outset of the pandemic than were comparable men without children. Married heterosexual men with children aged 13–17 actually saw smaller reductions in workforce participation from February to April 2020 than did comparable men without children (Landivar et al. 2020). Likewise, the gendered discrepancy of participation in the labor market was larger for mothers and fathers as compared to men and women without children in Canada and Germany (Fuller and Qian 2021; Hipp and Bünning 2021; Qian and Fuller 2020).

Reformulations of gendered divisions of labor within households generally involved women continuing to do more unpaid work than men in their households. At the outset of the pandemic, partnered heterosexual men often did more unpaid domestic labor than prior to the pandemic, but so did the women in such households. A gender gap in the amount of time spent on unpaid domestic labor in heterosexual households remained (Carlson et al. 2021; Carolan 2021; Craig 2020; Craig and Churchill 2021b; Dunatchik et al. 2021; Shafer and Scheibling 2020)—especially in relation to undesirable housework tasks (Del Boca, Daniela, and Profeta 2020; Hank and Steinbach 2021; Hipp and Bünning 2021; Meraviglia and Dudka 2021; Ruppanner et al. 2021; Yaish and Mandel 2021) and childcare related to formal education (Seiz 2020; Umamaheswar and Tan 2020). Mirroring work on the “second shift,” which finds women consistently do more unpaid domestic work in heterosexual households even when both partners are employed (Bianchi, Milkie, and Sayer 2000; Davis and Greenstein 2020; Hochschild and Machung 1989), the gender gap in unpaid labor increased in U.S. households in which both heterosexual partners kept working outside the home because women completed even more household labor in response to the pandemic (Dunatchik et al. 2021). Even in heterosexual households where men and women both began working from home, women were more apt to reduce the time they committed to paid labor (Collins, Landivar et al. 2021; Landivar et al. 2020) while increasing their time on unpaid domestic labor (Yaish et al. 2021). This will likely have lasting consequences for many women’s careers. Analyses of academics’ productivity during the initial stages of the pandemic, for example, point to mothers’ research productivity being undermined when they began spending more time on unpaid domestic labor after beginning to work remotely (Amano-Patiño et al. 2020;

Barber et al. 2021; Kisitu 2020; Minello and Martucci 2021; Minello et al. 2021; Ribarovska et al. 2021).

Paralleling decades of feminist scholarship that has stressed multiple types of labor are centrally important to gendered inequalities (Daminger 2019; DeVault 1991; Robertson, Anderson, and Hall 2019), inequities in cognitive and emotional labor have been as important to gendered responses to the pandemic as time spent doing physical labor in households (Boncori 2020; Calarco, Meanwell, and Anderson 2020b; Czymara and Langenkamp 2020; Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir 2021; Lagomarsino, Coppola, and Parisi 2020; Manzo and Minello 2020). Echoing pre-pandemic research that found women tended to be responsible for the cognitive labor of planning social reproduction within heterosexual households (Daminger 2019; DeVault 1991; Robertson et al. 2019), the burden of formulating effective household responses to the pandemic tended to fall on women in heterosexual households (Calarco et al. 2020b; Czymara et al. 2020; Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir 2021; Raile et al. 2021). Emotional labor, defined as the work of aptly manipulating one's own emotions to facilitate positive responses from others (Hochschild 2012), was also key to gendered pandemic responses. Reflective of how women tended to more intensively manage their emotions to facilitate positive reactions from others in heterosexual households before the pandemic (Erickson 2005; Umberston and Thomeer 2015; Wong 2017), women in gender-mixed households reported completing considerably more emotional labor than other household members following pandemic-induced disruptions (Friedman, Lichtfuss, and Martingnetti 2021; Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir 2021; Lagomarsino et al. 2020).

Gendered Work and Well-Being

Gender inequities related to labor during the ongoing pandemic informed both physical and mental health. Because women are disproportionately concentrated in occupations such as nursing, teaching, and food services, they were often especially susceptible to being exposed to COVID (Bahn et al. 2020; Rossiter and Godderis 2020; Zhang, Gurung and Anglewicz 2021). Beyond the disproportionate threats COVID posed to individuals' physical well-being as they navigated gendered, racialized, and classed labor markets (Dobusch and Kreissl 2020; Laster Pirtle and Wright 2021; Pham 2020), formal labor arrangements also had differential impacts on men's and women's mental health. By virtue of being concentrated in healthcare professions such as nursing, women constantly witnessed the final, deadly stages of COVID. Early reports indicate that women working in healthcare occupations are exhibiting especially high rates of symptoms associated with acute and post-traumatic stress disorders as a result (Regenold and Vindrola-Padros 2021; Shahrour and Dardas 2020).

Research has also generally found that mothers with children in their households were especially likely to have their mental health undermined by a host of household-level dynamics that ranged from family composition to interpersonal relationships between parents. German men and women in childfree couples reported feeling much better about work, family, and life in general than coupled parents from March through August 2020 (Hipp and Bünning 2021). Among coupled men and women with children, mothers reported worse assessments of work, family, and life generally than did fathers (Hipp and Bünning 2021). Similarly, mothers in the United States fared worse across a range of mental health indicators as compared to fathers and childfree men and women (Raile et al. 2021; Ruppner et al. 2021). Though the mental health penalty for coupled mothers as compared to coupled, nonparent women narrowed from March through July 2020, the gap between coupled mothers' and fathers' well-being remained steady (Zamarro and Prados 2021). One notable exception to this trend of an initial motherhood penalty on mental health are Ruppner et al.'s (2021) findings that the pandemic impacted Australian fathers' mental health more severely than mothers.

As these findings suggest, there were notable moderating influences on the relationships between mothering and mental health during the initial phases of the pandemic. Surveys and interviews with mothers in the United States and Canada indicate that trusting, mutually respectful, supportive relationships between parents helped alleviate mothers' pandemic-related stress (Calarco et al. 2020b; Pruett and Alschech 2021). When comparing heterosexual, gay/lesbian, and single parent households in Australia, Craig and Churchill (2021b) found notable differences in parents' satisfaction with their work-life balances. Heterosexual parents became less satisfied with the time they dedicated to paid and unpaid work during a lockdown, lesbian/gay parents remained as satisfied as before, and single mothers became *more* satisfied with how they split their time between paid and unpaid work. However, heterosexual mothers who continued leaving for work while their partners stayed home were likely to report that they felt *less* stressed about time constraints during the pandemic than before (Craig and Churchill 2021a). Also pointing to the significance of mothers' employment to their mental health, yet reaching a somewhat different conclusion about this relationship that aligns with previous findings emphasizing the "mixed bag" of emotions associated with mothering (Musick and Meier 2016), some mothers in the United States who lost jobs during the pandemic framed "increased parenting as a source of joy in otherwise difficult times" (Calarco, Meanwell, and Anderson 2020a:1).

The especially negative impacts of the pandemic on mothers' well-being were also directly related to gendered expectations surrounding parenting. Research has repeatedly illustrated that mothers are especially likely to feel

guilty about their inability to fully meet social expectations that frame good moms as selfless, endlessly patient superhumans who can provide their children with idyllic childhoods (Collins 2021; Hays 1996). Mothers across a range of settings often expressed particularly intense social pressures to care for children and other adults in their households as COVID upended their lives. When they inevitably failed to meet the impossible standard to create tranquil, immaculately clean, emotionally nurturing, and always entertaining households that doubled as schools and workplaces during a global pandemic, they often expressed intense anger, guilt, frustration, exhaustion, and anxiety (Calarco et al. 2020a; Calarco, Meanwell, and Anderson 2021; Clark et al. 2020; Friedman et al. 2021; Hennekam and Shymko 2020; Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir 2021; Kisitu 2020; Regenold and Vindrola-Padros 2021).

The erasure of previously established boundaries between work and home stemming from paid and unpaid labor simultaneously being accomplished within households regularly caused substantial stress for those working from home—especially for mothers who often completed a greater share of childcare and housework as they simultaneously worked in paid labor markets from home (Akuoko and Aggrey 2021; Boncori 2020; Calarco et al. 2021; Clark et al. 2020; Friedman et al. 2021; Hennekam and Shymko 2020; Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir 2021; Lagomarsino et al. 2020; Manzo and Minello 2020; Whiley et al. 2021). Attesting to the complex, gendered experiences of creating and navigating new arrangements of paid and unpaid work within homes, Boncori (2020) highlights the significance of technologies that enabled working from home. Meeting platforms such as Zoom allowed some individuals to remain employed during lockdowns, but they also erased semblances of boundaries between the public and private spheres that were previously in place. The gendered dynamics of formerly private spaces and interactions with other household members were suddenly on display for anyone who happened to be on the other end of a webcam during meetings.

Although gendered inequalities have generally been sharpened by pandemic-induced reorganizations of labor arrangements, it is not clear whether there will be a substantial backlash to these transformations. In fact, in the United States and Germany, there is evidence that heterosexual parents' attitudes concerning gendered labor and parenting actually became less egalitarian following the onset of the pandemic (Danzon et al. 2021; Mize and Kaufman 2021). Further, Calarco et al. (2021) show that heterosexual mothers in the Midwestern United States repeatedly justified their increasingly inequitable share of unpaid domestic labor and dislocation from paid labor markets by indicating that this was the most practical, natural response to school and childcare facility closures. As a result, even when schools and childcare facilities

reopened, many women remained out of the paid workforce so that they could fulfill their “natural” roles as child caretakers.

**Recommendations for Bolstering Research Examining Gendered Labor
and the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Different Types of (Un)Paid Labor and Laborers: A Call to Expand Analyses of Gendered Labor

Remote work has rightly received substantial scholarly attention, but the gendered dynamics of work that continued in more traditional organizational settings amidst the pandemic have not been considered in detail across a range of occupational fields. Traditional workplaces are key sites where inequalities associated with gendered labor are consistently reproduced and potentially undermined (Acker 1990). However, aside from Regenold and Vindrola-Padros’s (2021) consideration of the gendered experiences of healthcare workers in the British National Health Services, how individuals experience and navigate the gendered contours of traditional work settings disrupted by COVID has received scant consideration. Could many of the findings concerning the gendered contours of cognitive and emotional labor in pandemic households also characterize traditional workplace settings? Regenold and Vindrola-Padros (2021:6), for example, note that lead nurses “carried a heavy emotional burden” as they “sucked up a lot of sadness for the team.” Are there differences in how men and women are navigating risks associated with COVID when in occupational settings associated with femininity or masculinity? What is happening to the gendered contours of traditionally masculine settings that were already relatively hazardous such as construction sites and oil rigs? Given that shifts in the gendered composition of professions is associated with changes in pay (Levanon and England 2009), will pay be impacted by women exiting paid labor markets at higher rates? To answer such questions, analysts must assess how gendered individuals are navigating formal work settings during the pandemic.

Paid domestic work completed in others’ homes is centrally important to the reproduction of gendered inequalities complicated by race, class, nationality, and immigration status (Collins 2009; Herrera 2012). However, analyses of the pandemic that consider gendered labor in homes have focused almost exclusively on work done in one’s own household. This is an important oversight that needs to be remedied given the significance of paid domestic labor to gendered inequalities and the continued reproduction of individuals, households, and communities. For example, personal support workers, who tend to be women of color and/or immigrants, complete a variety of domestic and health related work for individuals who require such assistance while living at

home. Although personal support workers are indispensable to healthcare systems and individuals receiving their care, they are largely absent from scholarship on the pandemic and public accolades showered on first responders, nurses, and doctors even though these workers continued entering others' homes throughout the pandemic (Baxter 2020; Rossiter and Godderis 2020).

Aside from a handful of considerations (Baxter 2020; Leap, Kelly et al. 2022; Pham 2020; Stalp 2020), the gendered contours of unpaid work done outside of households has also received comparatively little consideration even though it is centrally important to the reproduction of households, communities, and gendered inequalities. This “third shift” of work, which often involves caring for extended family, coworkers, and community members more generally, has traditionally been completed by women (Gerstel 2000)—especially during socioecological crises (Leap 2019; Godderis and Rossiter 2013; McLaren et al. 2020; Moser 1993). Although this work was disrupted by initial lockdowns and social distancing guidelines, unpaid work outside of homes completed on behalf of family, friends, and communities never stopped. It has been centrally important to sustaining households and communities during the pandemic because neither governmental nor profit-based entities have been able to fully meet demand for necessities such as personal protective equipment (Leap et al. 2022; Leap, Stalp et al. 2022). Researchers must grant the gendered contours of unpaid labor being done outside of homes in response to the pandemic greater consideration.

Mothers and mothering have rightly received substantial attention from scholars examining responses to COVID-19 (Akuoko et al. 2021; Boncori 2020; Calarco et al. 2020a; Calarco et al. 2020b; Clark et al. 2020; Friedman et al. 2021; Kisitu 2020; Manzo and Minello 2020; Minello et al. 2021; O'Reilly and Green 2021; Whiley et al. 2021), but other types of individuals participating in gendered labor such as children, adults without children, and fathers require closer consideration. Whether and how changes in fatherhood have been prompted by the pandemic deserves particularly careful analysis because the meanings, practices, and experiences of fatherhood are associated with the well-being of men, women, and children (Norman and Elliot 2018; Wilson and Prior 2010); (in)equalities in gendered labor (Brandth and Kvande 1998; Norman 2020; Raley et al. 2012; Petts and Shafer 2018; Rehel 2014); and inequities among men with different races and classes (Randles 2020). Quantitative studies finding heterosexual fathers often began completing additional household labor at the outset of the pandemic (Dunatchik et al. 2021; Yaish et al. 2021) are especially notable because men's changing participation in gendered household labor often prompts shifts in the meanings and enactments of fatherhood (Brandth and Kvande 2018; Rehel 2014). Indeed, Mize et al. (2021) found increased support in the United States for the belief that

fathers “should be disciplinarian” after the onset of the pandemic. These findings are crucially important because they indicate that the pandemic induced shifts in fatherhood, but whether and how shifts in men’s participation in (un)-paid labor at the outset of the pandemic prompted lasting transformations in understandings and enactments of fatherhood deserves significantly more attention.

Recently published interview studies with immigrant Syrian fathers living in Sweden (Wissö and Bäck-Wiklund 2021), new French fathers (Sponton 2021), and custodial single fathers in the United States (Iztayeva 2021) provide important insights for such analyses. In each case, fathers exhibited a diversity of responses to the pandemic as they navigated confluences of personal beliefs, familial compositions, state policies, and positions within classed and racialized labor markets. Sponton (2021), for example, found that new French fathers who expressed relatively egalitarian views concerning gendered divisions of labor prior to the pandemic tended to split domestic labor more equitably when a lockdown forced them to remain home. However, those who expressed more traditional beliefs concerning gendered divisions of labor tended to do less domestic work as soon as their wives had physically recovered from childbirth even when they were at home because of a lockdown.

Beyond Rates and Hours: A Call to Extend Analyses of Gendered Labor

Initial analyses of the gendered dynamics of the ongoing pandemic have focused on employment rates and/or how much time individuals spent laboring in or outside of homes (Carlson et al. 2021; Collins, Landivar et al. 2021; Dunatchik et al. 2021; Fuller and Qian 2021; Hipp and Bünning 2021; Kristal and Yaish 2020; Landivar et al. 2020; Petts and Carlson 2021; Yaish et al. 2021). Formal employment and time spent working are undoubtedly important to gendered inequalities (Bianchi et al. 2000; Bianchi 2009; Craig and Brown 2017), but focusing exclusively on these dynamics does not enable a comprehensive assessment of the impacts of the pandemic on the gendered contours of labor. Even the gendered aspects of time itself involve duration *and* the subjective experience of time (Bianchi 2009; Craig and Brown 2017). Nevertheless, with few exceptions (Craig and Churchill 2021b; Hjalmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir 2021), analyses of the temporal dynamics of gendered labor during the pandemic have focused on the duration of time spent completing particular tasks.

Related to this approach to temporality, initial empirical analyses of gendered labor have largely been quantitative. These studies provided a wealth of invaluable findings, but methodological approaches that can better consider the complexities of the pandemic and its ongoing fallout are required (Agarwal 2021; Baxter 2020). The wealth of survey analyses of gendered labor during the pandemic are illustrative. A handful of these studies briefly present

qualitative data from responses to open-ended questions (Craig 2020; Craig and Churchill 2021b; Czymara et al. 2020), but they have largely relied on close-ended items—even when considered subjective perceptions of work (Craig and Churchill 2021a; Lim et al. 2020; Reichelt et al. 2021). If the particulars of who does what work, how that work gets done, and the full meanings of that work are not considered in detail, the relationships between work and gendered inequalities can remain obscured (Davis and Greenstein 2020; DeVault 1991; Leap et al. 2022).

The growing list of interview studies illustrates the need to continue bolstering initial quantitative studies with diverse methodological approaches (Calarco et al. 2021; Carolan 2021; Friedman et al. 2021; Hennekam and Shymko 2020; Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir 2021; Leap et al. 2022; Minello et al. 2021; Umamaheswar and Tan 2020). Reflecting on interviews conducted during the first months of the pandemic with parents in the United States, Averett (2020) notes that the flexible, interpersonal features of interviewing allowed her to explore, document, and empathize with the ambivalent meanings and emotional features of care work undertaken by parents as COVID upended their lives. A separate interview study conducted with academic mothers in Italy and the United States, for example, revealed that when these mothers were forced to work from home they often reorganized their schedules to spend less time on research while dedicating more time to teaching online and domestic labor (Manzo and Minello 2020; Minello et al. 2021). Although they were still employed and spending a tremendous amount of time on paid work, their prospects for academic advancement were undermined because they had shifted their efforts to a less-valued type of academic work. An analysis focusing solely on whether mothers in academia remained employed or how much time they spent on paid labor would not have captured these important transformations in gendered labor that will likely have lasting consequences on their careers and the gendered contours of the academy (see also Amano-Patiño et al. 2020; Barber et al. 2021; Kisitu 2020; Ribarovska et al. 2021). Carolan (2021) found that heterosexual, married men he interviewed in Colorado often spent more time doing work associated with their households during a lockdown. Nevertheless, they often framed this work as something they could temporarily do to have fun while “helping” their spouses who continued to be responsible for most household labor. Although men were spending more time doing more unpaid domestic work, this work still maintained “asymmetric power relations” within households because of the meanings ascribed to it (Carolan 2021:13). Focusing solely on the duration of time spent laboring would not have captured these gendered dynamics of shifting divisions of labor.

With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to disrupt households, communities, and societies years after its emergence in early 2020, it is also increasingly apparent that research must address how gendered labor continues to be reorganized following initial responses to the virus. Whether and how men and women who lost jobs or began working from home at the outset of the pandemic reenter traditional workplaces deserves considerable attention because this will have significant ramifications for inequitable labor arrangements in the coming years and decades, for example (Collins, Ruppner et al. 2021; Landivar et al. 2020; Reichelt et al. 2021). If it becomes increasingly acceptable for employees to work from home, these worksites could become “work ghettos for women” (Goldin 2021:15) where they will be expected to care for children while working from home with fewer career advancement opportunities (Alon et al. 2021). As Calarco et al.’s (2021) and Zamarro and Prados’s (2021) use of longitudinal data illustrates, longitudinal designs present significant advantages to studying ongoing reorganizations of gendered labor. Beyond documenting emergent responses to the shifting contours of the pandemic, by utilizing longitudinal data scholars can assess how initial adaptations to the pandemic inform ongoing reorganizations of gendered labor. Shifts in attitudes about gendered labor induced by initial responses to the virus, for example, will likely have significant, ongoing ramifications for labor and gendered inequalities in the coming years and decades (Danzer et al. 2021; Lim et al. 2020; Mize et al. 2021; Reichelt et al. 2021).

Beyond Gender (and Race and Class): A Call to Consider Intersectional Reorganizations of Gendered Labor

Reflecting feminist scholarship that highlights how gender is transformed through its reciprocally impacted convergences with other salient inequalities such as race and class (Choo and Ferree 2010; Collins 2009; Crenshaw 1989), research on adaptations to COVID-19 has started illustrating the need to pursue intersectional analyses of gendered labor. The effects of COVID on gendered work have often been very different for men and women with different races and classes (Agarwal 2021; Churchill 2020; Leap et al. 2022; Iztayeva 2021; Laster Pirtle and Wright 2021; Swan 2020). Analyzing Canadian employment trends, for example, Qian and Fuller (2020) note that low pay, dangerous working conditions, and high childcare costs combined to dissuade less-educated women, specifically, from reentering the labor market following lockdowns. Cautioning against a unitary focus on gender, Goldin (2021) similarly notes that education levels and race were centrally important to gendered discrepancies in labor force participation in the United States during the first year of the pandemic.

As significant as intersections of gender, race, and class have been, intersectional analyses of gendered divisions of labor cannot be limited to considerations of this traditional trinity. Intersectional analyses should be “context-driven” and remain sensitive to how individuals creatively navigate the historically contingent confluences of social inequalities that are salient in their households, communities, and societies (McKinzie and Richards 2019). By attending to these intersectional complexities, scholars and policy makers can better account for how ambivalent inequities between and among men and women are associated with gendered responses to socioecological disruptions such as the ongoing pandemic (Leap 2019). Beyond race and class, age (Baxter 2020; Lim et al. 2020), sexuality (Craig and Churchill 2021b), immigration status (Dobusch and Kreissl 2020), and place of residence (Alon et al. 2021; Carolan 2021; Collins, Ruppanner et al. 2021; Petts et al. 2021; Ruppanner et al. 2021) can also inform how gendered divisions of labor are reworked and experienced in response to COVID.

Highlighting the significance of place, and echoing decades of feminist scholarship emphasizing that state institutions have significant impacts on gendered divisions of labor (Collins 2019; Lewis 1992; Musick and Bea 2020; Orloff 2009; Ruppanner 2020), reorganizations of gendered work were impacted by state policies implemented in response to the pandemic (Alon et al. 2021; Bariola and Collins 2021; Mooi-Reci and Risman 2021). Women with children more rapidly reentered the Canadian workforce once childcare facilities and schools were reopened following the end of state imposed lockdowns (Fuller and Qian 2021). In the United States, some state interventions meant to slow the spread of COVID were associated with exacerbated gender inequities. Women living in states that fully transitioned primary schools online exited the workforce at higher rates than women living in states that continued to provide in person or hybrid schooling (Collins, Ruppanner et al. 2021; Petts et al. 2021). Similarly, there was a lack of evidence supporting the expectation that gender inequities would be worse in states with fewer policies intended to control the spread of COVID in four Western U.S. states (Raile et al. 2021).

Another especially notable trend in relation to place is that initial analyses of COVID-induced reorganizations of gendered labor have overwhelmingly focused on contexts in the Global North. Analyses of the Global South were increasingly published in 2021 (Agarwal 2021; Akuoko et al. 2021; Alvi, Barooah and Gupta 2021; Casale and Posel 2021; Hossain 2021; Sarker 2021), but significant work remains to better understand the context contingent ways that gendered labor arrangements have been reworked around the globe. Results from some of these initial analyses of countries in the Global South align with findings from the Global North (Akuoko et al. 2021; Sarker 2021), but this is

not always the case. Indian and Ethiopian men faced more severe disruptions to formal labor markets than women—likely because formal labor markets in these countries are overwhelmingly composed of men (Hossain 2021). Beyond the need to consider gendered divisions of labor in particular places in the Global South, analysts must attend to the fluid, inequitable relations between people and places in the Global North and South. The movements of men and women between these contexts are central to gendered divisions of labor around the globe (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2001; Herrera 2012). If studies remain largely focused on the Global North *or* if studies analyzing places in the Global North or South do not consider how these settings interface, we will continue to have a limited understanding of how gendered labor is being reorganized in response to COVID.

Conclusion: The Need for Ongoing Analyses of Gendered Labor in Pandemic Times

An impressive amount of research has been published on how gendered divisions of labor were reorganized following the emergence of COVID-19 in early 2020, but ongoing analyses of how gendered divisions of labor continue to be reworked are required. We should not expect to see consistent adaptations to the pandemic that align with its opening stages. Initial shifts in gendered labor arrangements will likely have lasting consequences for how labor and gendered inequalities continue to be reworked in the coming years and decades (Collins, Landivar et al. 2021; Czymara et al. 2020; Lim et al. 2020; Reichelt et al. 2021). Burgeoning challenges such as new COVID variants will also inform ongoing reorganizations of gendered labor.

We suggest the following three strategies for bolstering ongoing research into how gendered labor arrangements are being reorganized in response to the ongoing pandemic.

- 1 Future analyses should expand the types of (un)paid work and workers being analyzed. Individuals completing (un)paid work in their homes are especially important to gendered labor during the pandemic. However, the gendered contours of unpaid work outside of homes, paid work in traditional workplaces, and paid work in others' homes must also be considered. Analyzing mothers and motherhood will remain critically important, but whether and how children, childfree adults, and fathers are reorganizing the gendered features of their work deserves closer consideration.
- 2 Future analyses should extend initial findings concerning how physical, emotional, and cognitive labor are being deployed and reworked in response to the pandemic. Quantitative surveys will continue to be

indispensable tools for identifying general trends, but they must be supplemented by qualitative methodologies that can better consider the heterogeneities of individuals' and households' experiences as well as the nuanced, evolving meanings associated with gendered labor. Longitudinal studies will also be especially important for understanding ongoing reorganizations of gendered labor and how these reorganizations are linked to preceding responses to the pandemic.

- 3 Future analyses should incorporate greater consideration of the intersectional dynamics of gendered reorganizations of labor. Race and class will be especially significant, but age, sexuality, immigration status, and place are also important to gendered labor. Considering how state policies and the relationships between places in the Global North and Global South shape the emergent contours of gendered labor will be essential.

Different kinds of labor being carried out by gendered individuals and households attempting to navigate complex, intersecting systems of stratification in a variety of interconnected places around the globe will continue to be centrally important to emergent responses to the pandemic. By pursuing the three strategies outlined above, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how gendered labor arrangements continue to be reorganized in response to the pandemic and how these strategies relate to the reproduction, reorganization, and potential subversion of inequalities. Such findings will be indispensable for designing and implementing policies and programs meant to address inequities sharpened by the pandemic. These findings can also bolster our understandings of how gendered inequalities are reproduced, reorganized, and subverted, more generally. The COVID-19 pandemic is an exceptionally disruptive, catastrophic event whose evolving contours are unique, but considering how gendered individuals, households, communities, and societies respond to such disruptions provides openings to reconsider, test, and expand our foundational understandings of gendered labor and its associated inequities.

ENDNOTES

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