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Testing the concept of academic housework in a European setting: Part of academic career-making or gendered barrier to the top?

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Abstract

In the labour market women's jobs have frequently been conceptually and literally tied to housework and hence thought of as unskilled and therefore undervalued. Although academic institutions have undergone changes, the fact that women still carry the main responsibility for domestic and caring tasks continues to follow them into the academic work environment. In this explorative study we focus on the gendered aspects of undervalued work in academia by examining how academic housework manifests itself in different academic contexts and how early career academics in six European countries contend with it. We will link the undervalued academic work to housework in a double sense. Firstly, we will discuss how domestic housework affects the working conditions of academic women and men differently in their early career. Secondly, we will approach academic work through the lenses of academic housework, hence making use of the notion of 'housework' in a transferred and more figurative meaning. The discussion is aimed at developing a new conceptual framework in the analysis of gendered academic careers. In this way the topic of academic housework, which seems to be accompanied by social taint, may become more easily discussable within the academic work environment.

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Introduction

The gendered division of labour has been explored by feminist scholars during previous decades, with some of the more recent research addressing the impact of neo-liberal influences, the restructuring of work and its gendered consequences (see Ferguson and Hennessy, 2010). In the 'era of global competition' this is also affecting modern academia with its emerging discourse on 'excellence', and it has consequences for the work conditions of women and men in academia, especially for those in their early career. In this study we explore the gendered notion of 'academic housework' in an attempt to grasp the gendered aspects and plausible consequences of undervalued work within academia. In the 1990s Sylvia Walby launched the idea of two different forms of gender regimes in her historical analysis of patriarchy, against which women's paid work can be analysed. In the 'private patriarchy', or domestic gender regime, that existed until industrialism, women were to a large extent excluded from paid work in the labour market. In the 'public patriarchy', or the public gender regime, women were allowed to enter paid work but in segregated, undervalued and less paid jobs (Walby, 1997). In the labour market women's jobs have frequently been conceptually and literally tied to housework and hence thought of as unskilled and therefore undervalued. This applies to female dominated jobs that are often seen as the extension of domestic work such as care work, nurturing, service or cleaning work, which are thought to be connected to women's innate capacities (Ferguson and Hennessy, 2010). In the following study we will focus on the gendered aspects of undervalued work in academia. On the one hand, while exploring the working conditions of early career academics, we fully acknowledge that the largely invisible housework chores tend to remain women's responsibility more than men's. On the other hand, we approach academic work through the lens of academic housework, hence making use of the idea of 'housework' in a transferred and more figurative meaning. Our discussion addresses how academic housework manifests itself in different European academic contexts and how early career academics contend with it, and aims at developing a new conceptual framework in the analysis of gendered academic careers.

The academic environment

Job openings within academia are relatively rare, and because of globalization, massification, commercialization and managerization (O'Connor, 2014), early career academics experience fierce competition when it comes to obtaining an academic post. Various studies show that social capital and informal networks play a crucial role during the academic selection process (e.g. Heijstra et al., 2016; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2012) in which more senior academics function as gatekeepers, protecting the exclusivity of their academic status group, by only granting access to a select few.

Early career academics tend to be determined and persistent in their aim to obtain a position in the academic status group, despite likely setbacks. Hochschild (2005) identified five coping strategies in order to deal with such setbacks. She identified workers as endurers, deferers, busy bees, delegators and resisters. While the experiences of early career academics depend on their work experience, informal networks and agency (Remmik et al., 2013), based on the findings of Heijstra et al. (2016) most early career academics can be classified as deferers. They approach their current situation as a temporary one, thereby justifying their narrow focus on life within academia.

The temporariness of the situation, as Hochschild (2005) points out, is rather flexible and can last an extensive time period. Others qualify as busy bees, seeing a challenge in whatever activity they undertake, despite the risk of hollowing themselves out. According to Hochschild, both deferrers and busy bees may be practising a covert form of emotional control management in which they suppress feelings and emotions. The downside, as indicated by Manley-Casimir et al. (2012) is that the price of belonging when entering the academic environment can be substantial in terms of expectations for institutional compliance and conformity. Hence particularly women and other marginalized groups may experience difficulties in negotiating their entrance to the profession. Moreover even if they enter successfully, women's secondary status in higher education is an ongoing theme in research. As early as 1964 Jessie Bernard theorized on women's position within universities. A decade later Dorothy Smith (1974) described the male sociologist theorizing as freed from bodily existence, by women taking care of the 'messiness' of the body, and how that effected knowledge production. In a bifurcated world the male sociologist lives in one part (the conceptual world) and female sociologists in both parts (the conceptual part and in the home/the body). His work is thus clean while hers is tainted, i.e. dirty. Numerous other works later followed this pioneering work (see e.g. Baker, 2014; Brooks, 1997; Sagaria, 2007) – repeatedly pointing towards masculine working culture. For instance the minimal requirements to achieve academic excellence, features that are generally related to male behaviour, are levelled up by extensive working hours and workload, total dedication, competitiveness, and few expressions of emotions. Earlier, Weber used the concept of work ethic in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930/2000) to refer to hard work as a means to improve life conditions, and individual responsibility (Miller et al., 2002). Traces of these notions can still be found in today's academic work ethic. Hard work is accompanied by symbolic capital and internal rewards such as intellect and status, which are perceived to improve life conditions to a larger extent than external rewards in the form of economic capital. Individual responsibility, appears through the ideology of meritocracy, in which hard-working academics are believed to be rewarded more by the system than their less productive colleagues.

Family responsibilities

As the academic work ethic requires full dedication to the academic profession this is especially challenging for early career academics who want to establish a career and family simultaneously as such conduct can be interpreted by gatekeepers as lack of academic dedication. In an American research institute, fathers who wanted to spend time with their family were penalized for this 'unconventional' behaviour by having their promotion delayed (Sallee, 2012). Family life however still seems to be affecting the academic career-making of women to a larger extent than that of men. For instance, a study on gender neutral tenure-clock-stopping policies for new parents, which are intended to especially support women that have larger caring responsibilities than men, revealed that fathers rather than mothers were benefitting from such policies. During the year that the tenure clock was put on hold, the men became more productive and published more often in higher ranked journals, while women in the same situation were much less able to do so (Antecol et al., 2016). Furthermore, women with young children have been found to be labelled as being less serious about their academic career (Ginther and Kahn, 2004), while young academic women on longer-than-average summer breaks, experienced negative academic career consequences because of this in Iceland. The career progress of men in similar situations however remained unaffected (Heijstra et al., 2015).

In the 1990s Davies (1989: 38) wrote that women's time at home becomes 'other's time'. A study that was done 20 years later by Rafnsdóttir and Heijstra (2013) among academics showed

that men were still more able than women to control their time at home and at work. In contrast to the men, the women were more likely to express the view that they were feeling like hamsters in wheels, running between work and family obligations, without having real control over their time.

Although flexible working hours and work autonomy can be helpful to academic parents when organizing their working day and fulfilling the ever-changing needs of family members, women more than men seem to be stuck in caring and domestic responsibilities because of this same flexibility. The gendered time use and flexible working hours reproduce traditional power relations between men and women and the gender segregated division in the home. While men are likely to reveal that they are 'assisting' in the household, some studies have found that not everyone experiences the division of the housework as unequal. For instance, a study by Pétursdóttir (2009) among Icelandic employees in various lines of work revealed that men actually perceived their share in domestic and caring tasks equal to that of their partners, even though in reality this was not the case. Pétursdóttir argued that the participants in her study had created a 'task division' that both partners were content with, and because of that they tended to perceive it as a gender equal situation.

Academic housework

While numerous studies on work–family balance have pointed out that work can easily flow into the private atmosphere, for instance by means of information and communication technologies (Heijstra and Rafnsdóttir, 2010), less attention has been paid to the fact that certain aspects of the private atmosphere can also spill into the work environment. In line with what Dorothy Smith (1974) has argued about men theoretically being freed from bodily existence while women bear that responsibility, we argue here that carrying the main responsibility for domestic and caring tasks follows women into their work environment, as the responsibility for such service tasks is not easily left behind at home. Referring also once more to Walby's different systems of patriarchy (1997) and the notion that women's jobs have been conceptually and literally tied to unskilled housework (Ferguson and Hennessy, 2010), it is not only within female dominated jobs that gender differences occur. Women tend to take on more undervalued chores in their workplaces and even in professional work environments, such as the academic environment. Despite its ideology of meritocracy, its focus on science, its strong work ethic and its emphasis on academic excellence, there are chores in the academic environment that are less rewarded than others. For instance, tasks relating to giving back to the community, administrative and committee work, gender equality initiatives and various teaching and research-related activities such as student interactions and the organization of conferences. Heijstra et al. (2016) point out that academic women in Iceland are supposed to participate in all kinds of committees in the name of gender equality, while there are also indications that women in academia are more likely to be part of confidential personal conversations than their male colleagues. In an online writing Green (2015), a female professor, reveals that she regularly gets requests from either colleagues or students to discuss their personal affairs. Green (a pseudonym) estimates that every three weeks she has someone crying in her office. Not only are such requests emotionally demanding and time consuming, but Misra et al. (2011) argue that emotional service work is invisible work which pulls female academics more than male academics away from research, as women tend to spend more time on service work and mentoring than men. Emotional service work therefore forms part of what has been referred to as natural chores of academia, which in a previous article (Heijstra et al., 2016) we have been referring to as 'academic housework'.

Our concept of academic housework bears resemblances to the early formulation by Hughes (1951) of dirty work. He explains how an occupation is best described as a bundle of different tasks where each task has a place on a prestige scale. Hughes maintains that in every bundle there is a

task or tasks that, based on their low prestige within a certain context, come to be defined as dirty work. He furthermore writes that: '[A] task that is "dirty work" can be more easily endured when it is part of a good role, a role that is full of rewards to one's self' (Hughes, 1951: 295). This could therefore well apply to the academic profession which generally is considered to be a prestigious profession. Moreover, based on one's status within the occupation, dirty work can be outsourced to others who have less status, but taking on such dirty work is not without risk as it can leave one socially tainted, thereby affecting one's relationship with members of the same occupation (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999).

Other scholars have used the term 'academic housework' in a different theoretical context from what we intend to do here. Bauer (2002) used the term 'academic housework' in a discussion about the institutionalization of Women's Studies within US academia without defining the concept in detail. She uses 'academic housework' together with Hochschild's concept of the 'second shift' to illustrate the workload and uncompensated service work required from feminists to keep the subject of gender studies alive in academia, implying 'the nurturing, sustaining, fostering of students, a labor made "natural" because of their interest in furthering a Women's Studies agenda' (p. 246). In a similar vein Fitzgerald (2009) employed the concept to make sense of the situation of earlier generations' academic women in the masculine environment of the University of New Zealand. She uses the term in a literal sense by arguing that the establishment of the Department of Home Science constituted the space that women academics were given at their entry into the university. In this 'academic kitchen', New Zealand academic women taught highly feminized subjects such as nutrition, clothing and home management, and they were expected to 'engage in work that involved a level of maternal care for women students' (p. 25). In addition, Boughey (2007) mentions academic housework in a discussion on the conditions for black students in South Africa after Apartheid. Boughey maintains that efforts on behalf of academics in student support had similarities with 'what Grant and Knowles (2000: 84) term as "academic housework" because of its focus on "unrecorded and unrecognized pastoral care within universities"' (Boughey, 2007: 20). Notwithstanding valuable insights in the above discussion we develop the concept 'academic housework' in another direction. Up until now we have conceptualized academic housework as:

> all the academic service work within the institution that is performed by all academic staff, both women and men, but that receives little recognition within the process of academic career making or within the definition of academic excellence. (Heijstra et al., 2016)

In this exploratory research we will develop the concept of academic housework further, by utilizing the input from data collections from six European countries on this topic. Previous results have identified that early career academics are to a larger extent involved in academic housework than associate and full professors, as the latter are more likely to be able to redistribute such tasks to academics in more subordinate positions. The same study reveals that while women in Iceland are still underrepresented in the highest academic positions, they frequently form the majority of academics within subordinate academic positions (Heijstra et al., 2016). It therefore seems important to obtain further insight into the experiences of early career academics with regard to academic housework and take gender into account. This article therefore revolves around the following research question:

> How does academic housework manifest itself in different European academic contexts, how do early academics contend with it, and is there a difference between men and women?

By working towards an answer to this question we intend to contribute to both the existing scientific literature as well as to the actual work conditions of academics. First of all, by raising awareness of

the concept of academic housework we intend to initiate a discussion on academic work: which aspects of the profession are valued within the academic system and for what reason, and which aspects remain undervalued and unseen? Active promotion of the concept within Icelandic academia in the past 12 months has overall been positive. Academics in various SSH (Social Sciences and Humanities) departments are found to have integrated the term into their conversations with women finding it empowering to connect their own experience to the concept of academic housework, while some of the men seem more concerned that the concept will put a taint onto their profession. In order to detach themselves from such a notion, some men have addressed academic housework as nitpicking; for instance, having to wipe out the whiteboard before starting class, became referred to as academic housework. Secondly, we like to raise awareness of the fact that even though the job descriptions of academics in various ranks may be very similar, some academic tasks tend to land disproportionally on the shoulders of certain academics and much less on others, due to gender regimes and the more subordinate position of early career academics. Thirdly, the concept of academic housework is an addition to the list of causes creating both leaky pipeline and glass-ceiling problems, but which so far has largely been ignored in the scientific literature. The sticky floor phenomena has been defined as the opposite of the glass ceiling phenomena (Kee, 2006) and refers to various aspects that keep women in the lowest ranks of the organizational hierarchy (Schueller-Weidekamm and Kautzky-Willer, 2012). Fourthly, by relying on comparative European data we are able to develop the concept of academic housework from different angles, thereby improving its trustworthiness and rigor (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015).

Methodology

For this article we rely on empirical data that were collected and analysed by scholars in Iceland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Slovenia and Switzerland as part of the GARCIA research project, Gendering the Academy and Research combating Career Instability and Asymmetries, that is supported by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Union. The project is concerned with gender equality in European universities and research centres, and is based on multiple-data collection methods including statistical data, secondary data, semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

The concept of academic housework was previously developed from the Icelandic data only, relying on 14 semi-structured interviews with eight female and six male scholars. The University of Iceland, which formed the venue for our main data collection, is an interesting scene to examine the applicability of the concept of academic housework, not in the least place because of the university's dedication to equality policies, and the country's defamilization policies (Lister, 1997: 173), and high level of gender equality as measured by the Global Gender Gap Report (Hausmann et al., 2015).

In addition to the Icelandic data in this explorative study we are relying on data from the partner countries to provide comparative and contrasting insights and to help conceptualize academic housework in more detail. Each partner country was responsible for a set of semi-structured interviews on the topic of gendering practices within the academic environment and the phenomenon of the leaky pipeline. Partners were given the autonomy to conduct semi-structured interviews in their own language or in English. Interviewees, both men and women, were selected by means of purposive sampling; they needed to be PhD holders, at the early stages of their (academic) career, and those that could be qualified as either stayers or movers with regard to the academic work environment. Preferably, they were working or had experience within the selected STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematic) or SSH departments, although this did not always turn out to be possible due to small sample sizes. The Icelandic team, for instance, broadened its selection criteria to include other STEM and SSH departments within the selected academic institution

as well. Questions generally revolved around participants' everyday life experiences, their academic department, and professional and private biographical lifelines. Each partner country was guided by the same interview frame, but was free to add or leave out questions as they saw fit. Two questions were added to the overall interview frame at the request of the Icelandic team, one inquiring about salary and the other about academic housework: '*Do you think that you are (were) adequately paid for the work you do (did)?*' And: '*Are (were) you expected to be engaged in extra undervalued work?*' By adding these questions we attempt to flesh out the meaning of academic service that 'receives little recognition and holds low prestige' by explicitly spelling out the content and linking payments and undervalued work to each other. Scholars in the participating countries conducted the semi-structured interviews, recorded and transcribed them, and wrote an analysis in English on the main outcomes to these two interview questions. Each country's analysis is based on data from approximately 20–35 interviews. Subsequently the Icelandic partner thematically analyzed the six reports using Atlas.ti, version 1.0.2(68) research software, by focusing on common codes and themes as well as dissimilarities within the country reports. The themes that derived from this total analysis are discussed in the following section.

Exploring academic housework in various contexts

Interviewees within all countries could relate to the notion of undervalued tasks within academia, but saw such tasks not necessarily as a bad thing but rather as an integral part of the bundle of tasks of the academic profession. When asked what kind of tasks they had in mind, STEM interviewees emphasized in the first place research-orientated chores, like discussing and reviewing scientific articles, writing safety instructions for laboratories, administrative tasks that were related to international research projects, and the organization of alumni clubs, while SSH participants more frequently named tasks relating to teaching, such as the recruitment of students, supervision, student interactions, and the development of new teaching programmes. While giving lectures is not considered to be academic housework, as it, together with research activities, forms part of the academic job description, there are arguments available in both the Icelandic and Italian cases that could undermine this standpoint. First of all, in the Icelandic academic environment, senior academics can buy themselves out of lecturing but not out of research, while academics that are considered to be lacking in research productivity can be penalized for this behaviour by increasing their teaching load. Secondly, the Icelandic incentive system rewards a standard amount of points to teaching tasks, solidly based on whether or not the academic employee occupies a full-time position, while research activities are rewarded according to the amount of productivity. Moreover, the bundle of tasks given to adjuncts comprises largely of teaching responsibilities, and if they do complete research tasks, this is not always reflected in their salary. Sessional teaching is heavily underpaid but considered by gatekeepers as a way for newcomers to show their abilities. In the Italian situation there are cases where teaching is unpaid, but considered to provide valuable experience, and when it is paid for, the required multiple exam sessions are still excluded from terms of payment.

Regarding committee work, this tends to be valued as academic housework if the influence of the committee is limited and the level of prestige of the committee low. For example, in the Icelandic case it is considered less prestigious to be part of the teaching committee than of the science committee. However, there are also instances in which participants were referring to more highly valued committees, and approached membership of such committees as prestigious work that was reserved for permanent or high-ranked staff (the Netherlands). A similar opinion was shared by a female participant in the Icelandic sample who confessed she sometimes suffered from imposter syndrome when asked to take part in what she thought were prestigious committees.

'Extra work that pays off'

Overall, the interviewees were quite reluctant to take a negative stand towards academic household tasks, even if they were aware of the possible risk of being utilized as a cheap labor force. Newly tenured participants in the Belgian data thought of it as a sensitive subject and therefore '*tended to try to avoid answering directly to the undervalued work question'*. Instead, the participants were rather focusing on and anticipating that attending to academic housework was going to be beneficial for them in the long run. For instance, in the Netherlands some participants took a more Weberian stand by '*acknowledging that some tasks took more time than they were paid for, but they were trusting that in the long run this extra work would pay off*'. Within the Slovenian data there was discrepancy between whether academic housework chores would pay off in the long run or not. While the men at the STEM department were optimistic that these tasks would be beneficial, the women in the SSH department were more doubtful. A male participant explains: '*I don't believe I am exploited. In the long run, I can benefit from it*', while his male colleague went as far as arguing that he participated in academic household tasks with pleasure, thankful for the opportunities he was given. The women in the SSH department, however, were more concerned that the kind of academic housework that they were performing '*is not valued as "real" research*' and therefore will not count in terms of excellence measurements or promotion opportunities. In case of the Italian situation there is also acceptance with regard to academic housework, even if it is unpaid work. Making the unpaid work visible by adding it onto the CV, was considered to be important, as it was considered valuable experience with regard to future academic career-making.

When considering gender and the phenomena of the glass ceiling and the leaky pipeline, in particular, the perception of Slovenian women in the example, the results point to the various types of academic housework and the possibility that they are not all valued in a similar way. As the academic environment is a traditional male work environment with a male-orientated work ethic, the men in the different samples seem confident that their extra work will eventually pay off. The women also maintain this vision, although with less certainty. This is revealed not only in the Slovenian case but also shines through in feelings of imposter syndrome that some women experience when asked to participate in prestigious activities. Furthermore, in line with research on gender roles in Iceland (Gíslason, 2009), which revealed that men taking parental leave were received with admiration while women did not receive such praise but instead were met with suspicion if they took relatively short parental leave, it can be argued that participating in academic housework may have different outcomes for men and women. The participants were, overall, willing to attend to academic housework chores and invest valuable time into teaching and administration in order to create a positive image. Nevertheless while academic housework and relating social skills may be explained as an asset and a sign of full dedication to the profession on behalf of men, it seems plausible that similar efforts on behalf of women may stay unnoticed or will be explained as natural ability rather than as asset.

'Getting one's priorities straight'

Many of the participants within the various countries, especially the ones working in STEM departments, were aware that they could earn higher wages within the private sector. A Dutch male postdoc describes the situation in academia as: '*Shitty hours, shitty pay*' and was seriously considering quitting academia. Overall, academics were hesitant to complain or discuss their salary, although it does shine through in the Belgian data that some of the female participants were worried about their wages not being sufficient to make ends meet for them and their families, while this was not the case for men in comparable positions. It therefore seems that family responsibilities weigh

heavier on women than men in terms of the way that women are less comfortable putting their scientific interests ahead of their family needs, while the men trust that such investment will pay off in the long run. Participants in the other countries were either reasonably satisfied with their salary, or chose to emphasize the more intangible aspects of the profession instead. They argued that they were not in the profession because of the wages but because they valued features such as intellect, job satisfaction and autonomy to a higher extent. A Slovenian male participant even went as far as to argue that the intangible traits of the profession were so valuable to him that he felt he was actually being overpaid, despite his modest salary of €1700 a month. Maintaining and managing a positive identity is crucial when undertaking work that has been contextualized as dirty work, i.e. academic housework and what is at risk of being 'tainted by association' (Sanders-McDonagh, 2014: 243). A salient detail in this respect, however, is the finding that within the Belgian data, movers actually felt '*a higher work satisfaction level and greater personal freedom and well-being in their current jobs*'. This is remarkable as these are commonly assumed to be the rewards that follow a career in academia.

Regarding family life and sacrifices there was a remarkable difference to be observed within the Belgian data where male post-docs felt that their spouses were sacrificing more in terms of their own careers in order to help the male post-docs forward. Furthermore, while some of the female post-docs had concerns about moving abroad for valuable academic experience, because it would mean a relocation of the whole family, men in similar positions were not necessarily considering taking their family with them abroad. This finding runs parallel to a pattern that has been identified earlier (Heijstra et al., 2015) within the Icelandic data with regard to family responsibilities and work–family balance. We found that for women, prioritizing family was a condition, but for men prioritizing family was a matter of choice. While the women in the Icelandic sample were simply assumed to prioritize their family, the societal norms gave men the possibility to do so.

'Someone to watch over me'

From the analysis it turned out to be challenging to have participants discussing the downsides of the academic profession. While some of the Belgian interviewees did not consider it good manners to be discussing the more shadowy or dirty aspects of the academic profession, a female post-doc in Italy was clearly more open about it. She referred to academic housework as '*the blackmail of precariousness*' in which early career academics run the risk of being substituted and leaking out of the academic pipeline if they do not comply with the tasks that are given to them by more senior members. A similar comment came from a Dutch male mover who believed it to be impossible to say no to academic household tasks at the request of a supervisor. It therefore seems as if more senior academics function as gatekeepers, actively selecting who gets to continue down the academic path, and who discontinues. The notion of the presence of gatekeepers within academia also appears in the Dutch data where a female post-doc mover explained that she actively sought extra tasks, such as committee work, but that she was never given a chance.

However, there were other participants that had more positive experiences with regard to gatekeepers: not being asked to perform academic household tasks was cited by some, especially in STEM departments, to be an indicator that someone within academia was looking after the early career academics' best interests. He or she was given the space to focus on research and minimize teaching in order to get a research career going, which implies that teaching is considered to be a dimension of academic housework. In the Swiss data most of the interviewees describe their work conditions as excellent, and with enough time to attain to research. A Swiss STEM female participant explains that she was '*really, really protected from teaching, so we had a very small teaching*

load', which again suggests that teaching can be considered as academic housework. Furthermore this quote relates directly to the next theme, namely that of arbitrariness.

Gendered arbitrariness

The nature of academic housework entails that there is little official documentation on how much time, or how many academic housework tasks academics are supposed to complete. The situation turns out to be even more complex for post-doc students, as both the Swiss and the Icelandic data indicate that their academic obligations are often badly defined. Only in the Dutch case is there some kind of registration apparent with regard to academic housework. The Dutch academic employees receive a workload distribution table. Nevertheless, also in the Dutch case do few participants mention that tasks that would qualify as academic housework are explicitly mentioned in their contracts. The fact that academic housework is generally poorly administered consequently means that it entails a high level of arbitrariness. This becomes clearly visible within the Swiss data where being literate in French leads to more academic housework within the STEM department: 'In this department in particular there is a, a huge difference between people who don't speak French and people who speak French – and as I spoke French, I had a much, much bigger load of teaching hours', notes one of our interviewees. Another interviewee, notes that she's been 'relatively lucky', 'partly because people don't think [she] speak[s] much French'. So she hasn't been asked to provide a lot of courses that can 'ruin your experiments and ruin your (research) productivity'.

Whether or not speaking French has different outcomes for the career-making of men and women in the long run remains unclear. However, the importance of being given the opportunity to work on research rather than being occupied with teaching and administrative tasks is also displayed within the Italian data. A female post-doc argues: '*If you have the opportunity to do only data analysis you can learn and improve your skills. Instead, if you have to dedicate most of your time to administrative tasks you have less time for worthwhile activities like publications*'. This same female participant mentions, however, that she feels that the distribution of various academic chores is not at all arbitrary when it comes to gender, she explains: '*a young woman researcher is often considered a secretary and has to do numerous executive and administrative tasks; instead a young male researcher mainly does research activities, e.g. data analysis*'. A similar argument appears in the Slovenian data where a female leaver indicates that she was occasionally performing secretarial tasks. While she argued that she did not mind because she found it useful for her career, it is interesting that none of the male participants seem to have been using the word 'secretary' to describe their situation.

Discussion

The purpose of this article is to develop the concept of academic housework further, by addressing how academic housework manifests itself in different European academic contexts, and thereby obtaining a better insight into how early career academics, men and women, contend with it.

From the findings it has become clear that academic housework tasks are apparent in all six European academic environments, but with different emphases and nuances between the genders and departments. Gender plays a role, especially when it comes to certain undervalued tasks and how they are earmarked for women. In the more feminized departments such as is the case in SSH departments, participants more often mentioned teaching and teaching-related tasks with regard to academic housework, while STEM participants, working in largely male-dominated departments, tended to discuss research-related academic housework. We are therefore confident

that the concept of academic housework, in the sense that we put forward in this article, applies to the academic work environment of a broad group of academic employees, and not singularly to those in Iceland.

However, it is worth pointing out that many of the early career academics that we spoke to in our study did not necessarily hold a negative stand towards academic household tasks. There was a general level of acceptance for these tasks, as the participants frequently looked upon them as part of the academic profession work package, or as good investments into their academic career. Many were also convinced that academic housework contained valuable work experience that was worthy of their time investment. This is based on a conviction that might be understood as recalibrating to maintain a positive self-image while doing dirty work (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999), as well as being an attempt to live up to the academic work ethic in order to be able to become part of the status group. After all, the price of belonging when entering the academy is considered substantial and may require institutional compliance and conformity. Criticizing certain aspects of the academic profession can easily be explained as lack of dedication to the academic work ethic, and objecting to academic household tasks was potentially a slippery slope, not the least in very competitive fields. Again there were nuances between the different groups of participants, for instance, while it may be relatively easy for participants with a STEM background to find employment outside the academic environment, this is considered more challenging for early career interviewees in SSH. This gives STEM interviewees two good reasons to complain less about academic housework than SSH interviewees: first of all if they do not like it they can quit and find employment elsewhere, and there were indeed indications of that. Secondly, because of smaller student–teacher ratios in STEM as compared to SSH, perhaps STEM early career academics have less academic housework to attend to, as we have seen in the GARCIA project, and therefore they do not feel the urge to complain about it. We indeed found evidence that early career academics with high teaching loads in SSH departments were more negative towards academic housework tasks than others. For that reason the academic housework tasks may press more on SSH interviewees than STEM interviewees. What is more, the SSH departments tend to be more feminized than the STEM departments, which implies that academic housework in the form of teaching and teaching-related tasks affects women more than men. This is a pattern that is not only visible in Iceland but appears in other countries as well (Dubois-Shaik and Fusulier, 2015).

It seems that most early career academics have a vision of the great work circumstances that they will eventually obtain once they have invested enough in their academic career. Autonomy, flexibility, intellect and job satisfaction is what early career academics are after rather than large wages. It was therefore remarkable that the Belgian data revealed that some movers actually experienced more autonomy and job satisfaction after they had left academia and found alternative employment. This is something that will be worth looking into in the near future. Valuable insights were gained from the other participating countries as well. Together with the Icelandic data, the Italian data made visible the fact that teaching activities can in themselves qualify as academic housework in cases where an academic is are not paid for the teaching. Furthermore, the role of supervisors with regard to the distribution and access to academic housework became clearly apparent. In turn, the Dutch and Swiss analyses provided important insight into the variety and arbitrariness of academic housework, while the Slovenian analyses made us more alert to the intangible parts of the profession and indeed the subordinate position of wages within the academic environment.

Within the data deriving from early career academics on academic housework, the issue of emotional work was not discussed. Still there are indicators that would relate emotional work in academia to the work package, especially to the academic work package of women that are being contacted to provide a listening ear or act as a mentor (Misra et al., 2011). This type of academic

housework, however, may be more relevant to more senior academics, for instance, those in full and associate professor positions. As this group of academics was not part of this current research, this will be an interesting research topic for future research. The expectation is that emotional work will be especially part of the academic household chores of academic women in the higher ranks. Altogether these new insights helped to develop the concept of academic housework. In its new definition the concept of academic housework represents:

> All the important but largely invisible and undervalued academic activities, which bear resemblances to the 'second shift', of which the extent and components are contingent with the employees' gender, academic rank, the work culture of the subject field, as well as the level of intervention of more senior gatekeepers.

The strengths of the study relate first of all to the credibility of the findings. In line with Denzin's (1978) discussion on triangulation, we have utilized multiple sources of data that derived from six different European countries. We collected data from both men and women, stayers and movers that were either STEM or SSH orientated, and relied on the expertise of multiple investigators.

With regard to academic housework, another strength of the study is the user-friendliness of the concept, which therefore may encourage the discussion of a topic that has so far still been largely a taboo in academia. Possibly in part because of the social stigma that goes with doing tasks defined as 'dirty' in a bundle of tasks that make up the academic profession (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Hughes, 1951; Southgate and Shying, 2014). '*In this way the "dirty particulars" are wrapped in more abstract and uplifting values associated with the larger purpose*' (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). Such as is the case in our discussion on extra work that pays off and getting one's priorities straight. By broadening the concept, and not only referring to the situation in women's and gender studies but in other academic fields as well, the discussion can be helpful to a larger quantity of academics. In the Icelandic SSH departments this has already proven to be useful.

As in every study, this one also contains weaknesses. Except for the Icelandic data, the authors have not been able to work with most of the original data themselves, but instead had to rely on the analyses of other scholars. Nevertheless, from an ethical point of view we believe that it is important that experts within each country estimate and analyze the situation instead of approaching all data from the Icelandic perspective. This method has indeed led to new insights that we may have missed out on because of a plausible tunnel vision. Whether saturation has been reached is another relevant question. When taking the interviews we felt that we had reached saturation point, however, after having analyzed the data of the various countries together we now can see that new information could still be obtained.

On the topic of academic housework, the main weakness of the concept is that along the road we have also experienced scepticism. That is to say, some have wondered out loud whether all academic work, especially teaching and teaching related tasks, is suddenly going to be qualified as academic housework instead of being an integral part of the academic profession. Apparently, feelings of pride and prestige are still very relevant within today's academic environment, and some academics seem worried about allowing for discussion on more sensitive topics, as this in the long run may damage the image of the academic as an ideal and clean (not tainted by dirty work) worker. Our analysis has formed a bridge between macro approaches on female dominated work in the labour market as an extension of women's domestic roles, and micro-level interaction in workplaces in which certain aspects of the domestic sphere, i.e. housework, spill into the work environment. In addressing the leaky pipeline phenomena within the same institutions and thus covering the same participants, Dubois-Shaik and Fusulier (2015) have identified the institutions as gendered in the sense that all follow the scissor-shaped curve facilitated by

bottlenecks, glass ceilings and sticky floors – the third phenomena especially related to teaching which is linked to feminization of the teaching staff at the lowest level of the academic ladder. Taken together this has a ratchet effect for women, i.e. 'symbolic and recognition-based hurdles to cross' (p. 5) dependent on material conditions and configurations. This gives us some indication of the plausible effects of doing academic housework. As for future research to further test the concept we suggest a bigger sample that can better access gender effects and consequences, addressing other parts of the (academic) world, longitudinal studies that can better map academic housework and related phenomena, i.e. leaky pipeline, glass ceiling, sticky floor, movers and well-being.

To conclude, by developing a low-threshold concept to discuss a sensitive problem, our hope is that the topic of academic housework becomes more easily discussable. By raising more awareness of the concept on European level, this undervalued part of the academic profession will hopefully receive more discussion in other countries and eventually lead to this type of work being valued to a larger extent than it is now. Subsequently this should benefit early academic career makers, and women in particular.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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