FAMILY LIFE IN CONTEXT: MEN AND WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF FAIRNESS AND SATISFACTION ACROSS THIRTY COUNTRIES


Existing scholarship contends that satisfaction with family life is relative: that what individuals expect out of their marriages in terms of housework and possibly more generally depends on what is typical in that country. These expectations are derived from a relative deprivation framework, which claims that individuals engage in social comparison with similar others and experience dissatisfaction or other forms of psychological distress if these comparisons indicate that they are relatively worse off. In this article, we extend existing research on women's satisfaction with family life by asking two primary questions. First, can research which suggests that relative deprivation structures women's perceptions of fairness in and satisfaction with family life be extended to understand men's experiences? Second, what other individual-level features and country policies interact to influence satisfaction with family life? To answer these questions, we rely on individual-level data (N=14,351) from the International Social Survey Programme (2002) and country-level data (N=30) from the OECD Family Database, the World Economic Forum, and other sources. Using multilevel models, we find that relative deprivation does not explain men's experiences, suggesting the importance of the salience of egalitarian norms rather than relative deprivation for men and possibly for women. In addition, we find other significant individual- and country-level variables, broadening understandings of satisfaction with family life across a variety of institutional contexts.