



# Discussion of Burda, Hamermesh, Weill

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# Facts

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Paper gives precise numbers to several unsurprising facts

- about as much work to do in the home as there is in the market
- men do more work in the market and women more in the home
- Americans work more than Europeans
- Americans work more in the evenings and weekends, they watch more television ...



# Iso-work?

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- Focus on “iso-work” fact
  - On average men and women work the same number of hours
  - Men work more in the market
  - Women work more at home
  - Other within-gender inequality that averages out



# New?

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- Leeds (1917) – Penn sample, men worked 55 hours p.w., women 56
- Freeman-Schettkat (2005) – men and women in US and EU work about 60 hours p.w. each
- Robinson-Godbey (1997) – 14 countries, men and women work 50 hours each – they claim...



# Iso-work

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“... it is clear that, with the exception of Austria, Bulgaria, and Italy, gender equality in regard to total time in productive activity prevails in most Western countries.”

- They credit a “remarkable invisible hand” for this balance
- This paper tries to make it visible



# Important fact?

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- Not clear why
- Would have preferred more disaggregated approach
  - Working vs. non-working?
  - Parents?
  - Partners in a household?



# Strong inequalities in some directions: total work, USA

	men			women		
	employ ed	Nonem ployed	total	employ ed	nonem ployed	total
1965	62	27	59	67	54	59
1985	59	32	53	60	43	53

Source: Robinson and Godbey, 1997, p.108



# A digression

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- Leeds (1917) found a lot of between-household inequality. He explained much of the variation in home hours with the comment  
“...more use of the head would save much use of the hands and feet”
- Here is how he explains how one family who worked only 28 hours a week did it:



a bright young woman who is keenly interested in labor-saving methods. The hours given to cleaning are few, because her house has all hard-wood floors covered with rugs; dishes are washed only once daily (immediately after breakfast) and not wiped. The family is vegetarian, eats no pies or cakes, and rarely fries food, hence there are few greasy pots and pans to clean. There are no children, and the housewife does all the work, except for the assistance of a laundress one day bi-weekly. This young housewife feels that she has solved the housekeeping problem, but as there are no children, the family is not a “normal” one.



# Social norms

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- Is model convincing?
- Need more micro facts to differentiate between models – e.g., can social norms explain the big differences in previous table?
- Does social norms model deliver surprising results that can be tested?



# More micro tests, why not...

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- Run regression of total work on
  - Gender
  - Participation and market hours
  - Marital status
  - Children and other controls
- Are coefficients on gender, participation, marital status 0?



# Marketization vs. Engines of Liberation?

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- Authors dismiss too readily the marketization hypothesis: don't we eat a lot more in restaurants now, don't we give out more laundry?
- Hardly comment on engines of liberation view: don't we have a lot more time-saving appliances?
- Support rise of leisure without hard evidence
- What does your data tell us about these?

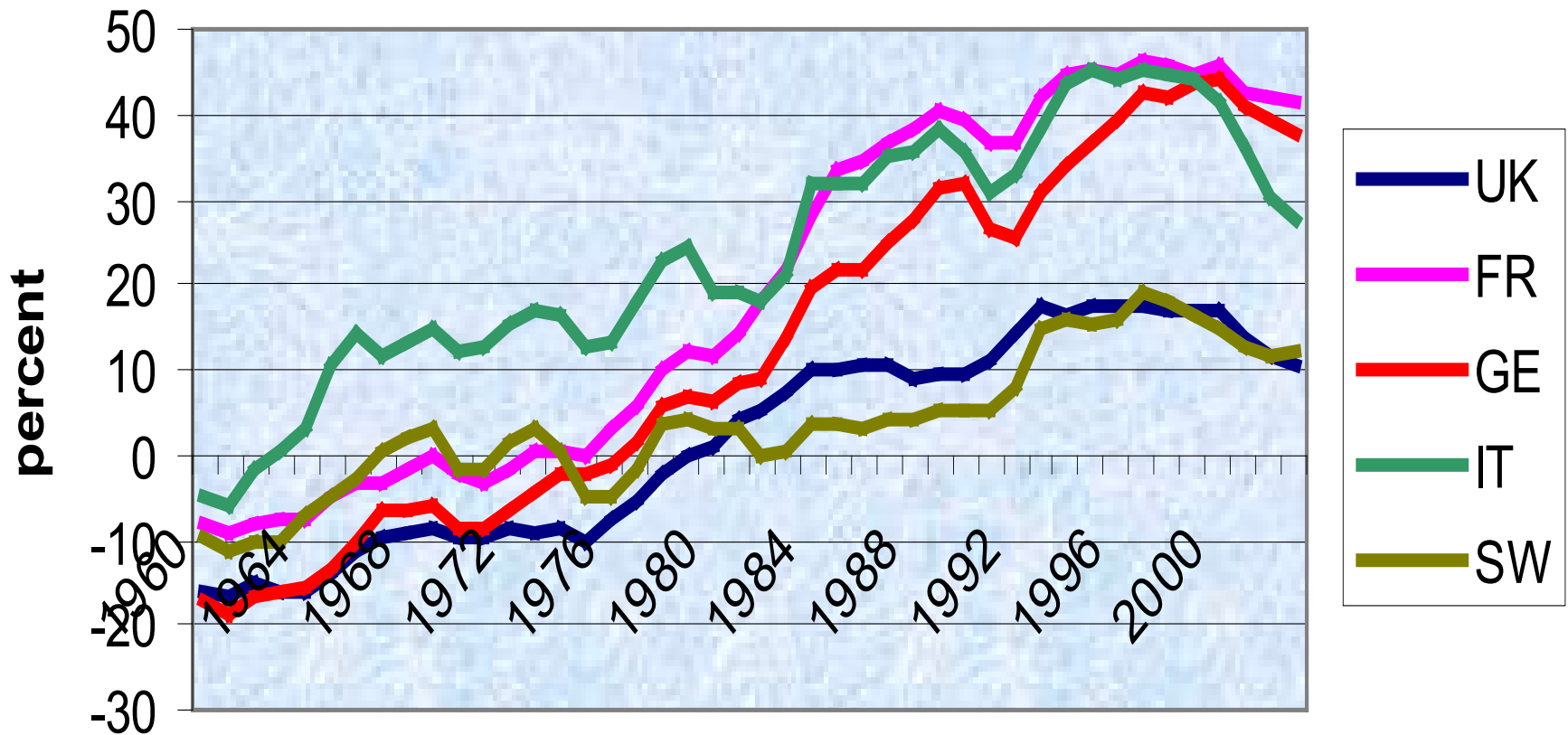


# Europe vs. America

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- Social norms explanation of differences in hours of work unconvincing.
- Data show gradual reversal of hours over 25 years
- Multiplicity due to social norms require faster adjustment

# Annual Hours of Work, US % excess over European country





# Model of chapter 3

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- Social norms play no role
- Based on marketization
- Cross-country regression with seven observations?
- Intuitive results: women marketize more than men



# Fixed costs

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- Appealing hypothesis
- Regressions find that main substitutions between market work and leisure
- But plausible only for small variations in hours
- Do people who work longer hours watch less TV but do as much cooking, cleaning, child care?





# Conclusions

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- Chance to give more micro data not taken up
- Model of social norms unconvincing
- Re-think marketization vs. engines of liberation
- Re-estimate substitutions between uses of time with micro data and no dummies