

FAMILY DIVERSITY AND THE DIVISION OF DOMESTIC LABOR: HOW MUCH HAVE THINGS REALLY CHANGED?

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Abstract:

Few studies have examined the distribution of housework across family types. Using a nationally representative sample, this paper examines the division of household labor in first-marriage families, stepfamilies, families headed by divorced mothers, and families headed by never-married mothers. Findings indicate that, across family types and regardless of women's employment status, women perform two to three times more housework than their husbands or cohabiting partners. Implications for family life education are discussed.

Article:

Previous research demonstrates that the most important factor influencing the division of domestic labor is gender, with women typically performing three fourths of all housework (Berk, 1985; Huber & Spitze, 1983). But very few studies have examined the distribution of housework across family types. Family diversity has been fueled by profound demographic and structural changes, such as high rates of nonmarital childbearing, divorce, single-parent families, dual-earner marriages, remarriage, and stepfamilies. Does family structure (e.g., first marriage vs. remarriage) affect the time that wives, husbands, cohabiting partners, children, and other family members spend on domestic labor? Ferree (1991) has demonstrated that there is considerable variability in the arrangements of two-earner couples and that it is important to examine subgroups of women who are more likely to be forced into a "second shift" (Hochschild, 1989).

Given the importance of early socialization experiences, it is also important to examine whether children in American families are witnessing or participating in a more egalitarian division of housework. Although some studies have examined children's participation in housework (Goldscheider & Waite, 1991; Huber & Spitze, 1983; White & Brinkerhoff, 1981), we know very little about variation in children's involvement across family types. For example, do children in single-parent families contribute in ways that compensate for the nonresident father? Having children do chores is a way of ensuring the family completes necessary functions. Housework is also a way of developing responsibility in children, of teaching them how families work, and of socializing them for families they later form (Goldscheider & Waite, 1991).

Family life education in the 1990s requires comprehensive understanding of the diversity of American families. Teachers, counselors, and other family professionals must be aware of common assumptions and myths associated with the monolithic "traditional" family, they need to recognize and appreciate dimensions of family life that have changed in recent decades, and they should understand family processes and arrangements that have not changed. A feminist perspective provides a useful and promising framework for strengthening family life education by emphasizing the value of diversity and equality in contemporary family life (Allen & Baber, 1992).

A central theme in feminist thinking on the family is that marital and family experiences are widely variable. Despite the pervasive ideology of the monolithic nuclear family (Demo, 1993; Thorne, 1992), diversity exists

across many axes. There are important variations by social structural location, especially gender, race, and social class; household structure; sexual arrangements; and the nature of marital, nonmarital, and family interaction. Feminists emphasize that families are not always or uniformly cohesive, that some men are more dominant than others in controlling women, and that the extent of male involvement in family labor is widely variable (Ferree, 1991). Despite this diversity, however, the lingering ideology of the monolithic family and "women's proper place" operates to oppress women (Thorne, 1992). Thus we would expect that, despite recent changes in gender ideology, women's employment, and family structure, gender inequality remains and women continue to perform a disproportionate share of domestic labor.

In this article we compare the division of household labor across four family types, all of which have at least one resident child age 18 or younger. We examine families in which both spouses are in their first marriage, families formed through remarriage, single-parent families headed by a divorced mother, and single-parent families headed by a never-married mother. If changes in family structure have generated changes in family processes, we would expect the division of household labor to be variable across family types, with some arrangements more egalitarian than others.

The analyses extend previous work in several ways. First, most studies of household labor examine two-parent families, ignoring how single-parent families divide domestic responsibilities (Voydanoff, 1987). Second, there is an overreliance on small convenience samples of white, middle-class families (Spitze, 1988). A large nationally representative sample provides the ability to compare the division of household work across families of different social classes, races, family structures, and other social categories. Third, the present study's data, collected in 1987-88, provide a more recent benchmark for understanding household labor than data collected in the 1970s (and earlier) that are typically analyzed in studies of housework and family relations (Spitze, 1988; for exceptions, see Brayfield, 1992; and Coltrane & Ishi-Kuntz, 1992).

Comparison of how domestic labor is divided across family types is complicated because husbands are present in two of our family types (first married and stepfamilies), but not in the other two types (divorced and never-married families). Still, all households in the current study in which mothers are divorced or never married have children and possibly nonfamily members who may offset demands on the mothers' time.

Another complication is that the presence of a spouse or partner may increase or decrease the time the mother spends on household chores. Spouses or partners provide a potential source of labor, but they also contribute to the amount of work needed. Families that do not have a father present lose both the labor he contributes to household chores and the burden he adds to the total labor required to run the household. Whether the husbands' labor exceeds the work he creates for others is an empirical question we can answer with our data.

By comparing our data with earlier studies, we can also address another question: How much has the division of household labor really changed over the past 30 years? Studies show that in the 1960s, husbands spent an average of 11 hours per week on domestic work (including roughly 2 hours per week on child care), while wives invested 35 to 40 hours weekly (including 6 hours per week of child care) (Coverman & Sheley, 1986; Walker & Woods, 1976). Thus, men spent between one third and one fourth of the time on housework as their wives, and this pattern persisted despite the number or ages of children and regardless of wives' employment status (Coverman & Sheley, 1986).

Studies suggest some modest changes occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. Although men's involvement in housework did not change much during the 1970s, the amount of time women spent on housework decreased significantly (Coverman & Sheley, 1986). One study suggests that by 1985, there were some increases in men's housework (Robinson, 1988). Still, married women continued to spend twice as much time as their husbands on housework (Barnett & Baruch, 1987). If marriages and cohabiting relationships have become more egalitarian in recent decades, and if changes in gender attitudes are indeed translated into behavioral change, we would expect a more egalitarian division of household labor in the late 1980s.

Finally, we consider married women's perceptions of equity in the division of household labor. There are reasons we would not expect women to report equity. Previous research documents that wives do substantially more family work than their husbands (Berk, 1985; Kamo, 1988; Warner, 1986). In addition, most of the work women do is invisible, unrelenting, repetitive, stressful, and devalued (Berk, 1985; Shaw, 1988). Yet traditional cultural norms suggest it is fair and just for women to carry the burden of household responsibilities. Many women and men continue to define family work as women's responsibility (Szinovacz, 1984; Thompson & Walker, 1989). Women also tend to compare themselves to other women rather than to men (Major, 1987), and to compare their husbands to other men (Hochschild, 1989). Within-gender rather than between-gender comparisons tend to evoke greater perceptions of equity (Thompson, 1991). Further, many women do not recognize or appreciate the variety or volume of the family labor they do (DeVault, 1987). These processes may facilitate women's perceptions that the division of housework is equitable.

In this article, we focus on three questions. First, does the domestic division of labor vary across different family structures? Second, how does the division of family labor compare with that of the idealized traditional families of the 1950s and 1960s? Third, how do women in various family structures and employment arrangements feel about the housework they do, and how it is distributed in their households?

METHOD

The data for the present study come from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), collected in 1987-88. The survey was designed and conducted by the Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin (Sweet, Bumpass, & Call, 1988). To ensure sufficient cases for statistical analyses, several groups were deliberately oversampled, including minority groups, single parents, stepfamilies, and cohabiting units. Parts of the survey involved face-to-face interviews, and other sections were done using self-administered questionnaires. We analyzed a subsample of 2,528 mothers living in one of four types:

First marriages (n = 1,155). These are families in which both the mother and the father are in their first marriage, and they have one or more biological children under 19 living at home.

Divorced (n = 677). A second family type consists of a mother who has divorced and has at least one biological child under 19 from a previous marriage living at home.

Stepfamilies (n = 277). The third group includes families in which the mother is remarried (that is, married for at least the second time) and has at least one biological child under 19 from a prior marriage living with her and her current husband.

Never married (n = 419). The fourth family type consists of a mother who has never married and has one or more biological children under 19 living at home.

Of course, family types vary dramatically on socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. For example, families headed by never-married mothers tend to have very low family income (an average of only \$10,512 per year for the families in our sample, compared to \$49,687 per year for first-married families). For these reasons we control for particularly important variables. Specifically, we control for family income, mother's education, mother's race, mother's age, hours the mother is employed each week, the number of people living in the household at the time of the interview, and (for single mothers) whether they are cohabiting. Because the presence of young children can increase domestic work, we controlled for the age of the youngest child in the household. The analyses used unweighted data. Using weighted data would substantially reduce the number of respondents in some groups (e.g., cohabitators, stepfamilies) and nullify the advantages of oversampling.

Measures

Family income is measured as total household income. Respondents who did not report their family income were assigned the mean income for their family type. This was done to reflect the large differences in family income across family types. Mother's education was measured in years, her race was coded as either white or

nonwhite, and the hours of employment used either the hours she worked in the previous week or, if she were temporarily away from paid employment, the hours she typically worked. The household size was the number of people living in the household at the time of the interview. For single mothers we controlled for whether they were cohabiting at the time of the interview. To control for the presence of young children, we used the age of the youngest child in the household.

In a self-administered section of the survey, respondents were given the following statement: "The questions on this page concern household tasks and who in your household normally spend time doing those tasks. Write in the approximate number of hours per week that you, your spouse/partner or others in the household normally spend doing the following things." Respondents were then given a series of household tasks: preparing meals; washing dishes and cleaning up after meals; cleaning house; outdoor and other household maintenance tasks; shopping for groceries and other household goods; washing, ironing, and mending; paying bills and keeping financial records; automobile maintenance and repair; and driving other household members to work, school, or other activities. Occasionally mothers reported many hours spent on individual chores. Extreme responses, those beyond the third standard deviation, were treated as outliers, and each of them was recoded to the value corresponding to the third standard deviation above the mean number of hours.

Equity of housework was measured by a single item asking married mothers whether they thought the division of chores was unfair to them or to their husband. In a self-administered section of the survey, respondents were asked, "How do you feel about the fairness in your relationship in each of the following areas?" The first area was household chores. A score of 1 = very unfair to wife, 3 = fair to both, and 5 = very unfair to husband.

Data Analysis

The statistical analysis used in the study needed to estimate the mean value on each dependent variable for each family type in order to (1) control for the other variables (household income, mother's education, mother's race, etc.) and (2) test for significant differences between means. This was done using the least-squares means statement in SAS Proc GLM. This procedure provides estimates of subclass marginal means (e.g., means for each family type) if the design were balanced (i.e., if families were otherwise equal on all the control variables). The estimates are obtained by holding all control variables at their respective mean values and then estimating the mean response on each dependent variable for each family type. Thus, the estimated mean is the expected value for each family type where the family type is average on all of the control variables. The choice of where to fix the control variables is arbitrary, and using different values results in different estimates. However, it is conventional to fix the control variables at their mean values.

The least-squares means statement has an option that performs a test of significance for all possible comparisons. These should be viewed as t tests for each comparison. For simplicity, we report which individual comparisons are statistically significant at the .05 level.

RESULTS

We examined both the percentage of different chores done by the mother and the hours she and other household members spend on chores. As we shall see, the two methods produce different findings and interpretations.

The Percentage of the Total Time Spent by the Mother

Table 1 presents percentages showing how much of all housework, and how much of each specific chore, is done by mothers in each family type. These figures reflect the depth of the household burden women have in the United States. As with other tables, the percentages reported in Table 1 adjust for effects of the control variables.

Table 1 shows that mothers report they devote the bulk of time on most household chores, corroborating earlier studies (Berk, 1985; Kamo, 1988; Mederer, 1993; Warner, 1986). The exceptions are outdoor work and car repairs, neither of which entail a substantial amount of actual labor. In addition, neither outdoor work nor car repairs tend to be done routinely or regularly (Melderer, 1993), unlike most jobs women do (Berk, 1985; Pleck,

1985). The data on actual time investments (discussed in more detail below) show that husbands and cohabiting partners average between 3 and 4 hours per week doing outdoor work, and between 1 and 2 hours per week doing car maintenance. When we exclude these two occasional tasks and consider only the routine tasks, across all family types mothers perform between 68% and 95% of the work. This means that, on average, women are doing at least two thirds, and usually three fourths or more, of the most time-consuming household labor.

Note that the percentages are of the total time spent on the chores. The total time includes time spent by the husband or partner (if present), children, and others living in the household. Even including all of these alternative sources of labor, mothers report they are the primary household laborers. This is not because mothers work fewer hours for pay than their husbands, because we adjusted for covariates including the hours per week the mother is employed. We will consider the case of mothers who are not employed in a section below.

Without diminishing the uniformly high percentage of household work done by mothers, regardless of family type, Table 1 shows there are still significant differences in mothers' household labor across family types. For most tasks, mothers do a greater percentage of housework when the father does not reside in the home. For example, compared to married mothers, single mothers do a greater percentage of preparing meals, washing dishes, shopping, cleaning laundry, and paying bills. For some chores, such as driving or paying bills, it simply is not possible for children or other household members to replace the work that might be done by the father in other family structures. Hence, the differences are especially dramatic in these areas.

The general pattern in Table 1 is that married women are similar in the percentage of time they spend (around 70% for most chores), whether they are in their first marriage or in a stepfamily. Divorced and never-married mothers are similar to each other in the percentage of time they spend (roughly 87% for most chores). It bears repeating that these percentages are not comparing the women directly to their husbands or partners. They are comparing mothers to all other family members combined. The total contribution of all individuals excluding the mother is a modest 10% to 30% of household labor, depending on the task. That single women, when compared to married women, spend a significantly higher percentage of the total time on most tasks, suggests that children and other household members in single-parent families do not compensate for the lost labor of an absent father.

Hours Spent on Household Chores

Table 2 presents the mothers' estimates of the hours per week they spend on each task. Combining all activities, mothers report spending between 40 and 44 hours per week on the household chores included, depending on the family type. As noted earlier, these estimates are adjusted for differences in the covariates (family income, mother's education, race, age, the hours per week she is employed, household size, age of the youngest child and, for single parents, whether the mother was cohabiting at the time of the interview).

Family type has a much less significant effect on the number of hours the mother spends on tasks than it does on the percentage of time the mother contributes. When the hours are summed over all the activities, there are small differences across the four family types. For our sample, the average divorced mother is spending 2 to 3 extra hours per week on household chores compared to married mothers. The total household labor of the average never-married mother is virtually identical to that of remarried mothers, and the totals for all four family types are remarkably similar. Importantly, none of these differences in total hours is significant. Thus, the findings suggest that the absence of a husband or partner does not significantly increase the time the mother spends on most tasks.

Children's Household Labor

The data show that, on average, children do little housework, but there is variation by family structure. Table 3 shows the hours contributed by husbands (where present) and children who are under 19 years old. Children under 19 average 3 to 6 hours per week doing household chores (compared to roughly 13 hours for their fathers and 40 hours for their mothers). Across family types, children of divorced mothers spend the most time, nearly 6 hours per week. This contribution is significantly greater than that of children in stepfamilies or never-married

families, who average between 4 and 5 hours per week. But the children doing significantly less household labor than any of their counterparts in other family types are those in first-married families, who average less than 3 hours per week.

The data provide some evidence for the argument that, in single-parent families, children's labor partially compensates for the work not being done by the nonresident father. This appears to occur in divorced families, where children do significantly more housework than their counterparts in other family types. On the other hand, children in stepfamilies spend more time on housework than children in never-married families. In all cases, children's housework amounts to less than 1 hour per day, a small fraction of what mothers do. It is noteworthy, however, that children in single-parent households and children in stepfamilies (most of whom lived in single-parent families for some time) perform more housework than children in first-marriage two-parent families. Children in the latter group average less than half an hour per day doing household chores. Importantly, these results control for the covariates, including the age of the youngest child, so these findings cannot be attributed to children in first-married families being too young to make substantial contributions to household chores.

At least for families with dependent-aged children, mothers' domestic labor is extensive and the father's presence or absence has little net effect on the amount of time mothers spend on household chores. Judging from the percentages alone, it seems that married mothers do less housework than single mothers. But when we examine the hours spent by each family member, it is clear that married women spend virtually the same amount of time on family labor as single women, partly because married women have the added responsibilities of another household member. Still, there are specific chores where the father's absence significantly influences the mother's work load. Compared to first-married mothers, divorced mothers spend slightly more time shopping, paying bills, doing car repairs, and chauffeuring family members.

Cohabiting Partners and Other Household Members

Other potential sources of labor are cohabiting partners and other adult household members. As shown in Table 4, the cohabiting partners of mothers in divorced and never-married families provide nontrivial contributions, roughly 13 hours per week of household work. These numbers are virtually indistinguishable from the household work of husbands in first-married and remarried families. The point remains, however, that the total domestic labor of husbands and cohabiting partners represents one third of the effort expended by mothers across all family types. Gender, not family type or statutory relationship, is the critical variable explaining domestic labor. Other people aged 19 and older invest very little time in family work, averaging 2 hours per week or less in single-parent families, half an hour per week in first-married families, and providing no assistance at all in step-families. It should be pointed out that relatively few households include other members aged 19 and older, and that most people in this category are older children. But there is also variation by family type. For example, more than 5% of never-married mothers report other adult relatives living in the household. Unfortunately, there are too few cases to conduct finer analyses of these household members and their contributions across family types.

Perceptions of Equity in Housework

The data show that mothers in their first marriage are no different from mothers in stepfamilies in their perceptions of equity. On a 5-point scale where 3 = fair to both, first-marriage mothers had a mean of 2.64 and stepfamily mothers had a mean of 2.66. It is provocative that with such a disproportionate share of the effort, mothers typically respond that the work is "fair to both." The average response shows some awareness of the inequity, as the mean is slightly below 3.0, but is not a clear statement that the results are unfair.

Because women who are not engaged in paid work may see things quite differently in terms of equity, we selected two groups of women. The first group worked for pay 30 or more hours per week, and the second group worked for pay zero hours. With these extreme differences we anticipated that those employed 30 or more hours per week would perceive much greater inequity. However, the results showed no differences.

Mothers who were not working for pay reported an average response of 2.7. Mothers who were employed 30 or more hours per week had an average response of 2.6.

Another factor that can influence the mothers' perceptions of equity is the amount of time they spend relative to the amount of time their husbands spend on household chores. Such comparisons also may be related to the number of hours the mother works for pay. To explore this possibility, we ran a regression of the mother's perceived equity on the hours she spends on all chores, the hours the husband spends on all chores, the hours the mother is employed per week, and the control variables. The model, including the control variables, had an R^2 of .08 ($p < .05$). The major predictors were consistent with our expectations. The more hours per week the mother worked for pay, the lower her sense of equity (Beta = $-.15$, $p < .05$). The more hours the mother spent on household chores, the lower her sense of equity (Beta = $-.16$, $p < .05$). The strongest effect, however, was the number of hours the husband spent on household chores (Beta = $.28$, $p < .05$). None of the control variables had a beta of .10 or more. Thus, when relevant variables are controlled, although mothers report a surprisingly high level of satisfaction with an objectively unfair situation, the mother's perception is responsive to her husband's effort, the hours she is employed for pay, and the hours she spends on household labor.

When Mothers Do Not Work for Pay

Because female labor force participation is such an important issue in its own right, we examined the division of household chores in families where mothers were employed and where mothers were not employed. We isolated mothers who did not work for pay outside the household ($n = 667$) and found that, across family types, they did an even higher percentage of household chores than employed mothers. Among nonemployed mothers, those who were married reported they devoted three fourths of the total time the family spends on chores (77% for first-married mothers and 75% for stepfamily mothers). Nonemployed single mothers did over 90% of housework (92% for divorced mothers and 91% for never-married mothers). When we isolated mothers employed at least 30 hours per week ($n = 870$), we found that married mothers still contributed nearly two thirds of the total time the family spends on housework (65% for first-married mothers and 64% for mothers in step families). Employed single mothers perform higher percentages of housework: 83% for divorced mothers and 86% for never-married mothers. Thus, employed mothers contribute a lower percentage of the total family time spent on housework than nonemployed mothers, and this finding holds across family types. Viewed differently, these findings illustrate that the effects of family type are identical for both employed and nonemployed mothers. That is, whether employed or not, divorced and never-married mothers assume a greater percentage of household labor than married mothers.

Recall that in a previous section we showed that the hours mothers spend on household chores do not vary as widely across family types as the percentage of time mothers spend on chores. The same pattern emerges when we compare employed and nonemployed mothers. Figure 1 shows the total number of hours mothers spend on household chores for each family type by whether they are employed or not. These are represented by the top two rows of large hexagons. Figure 1 also shows the number of hours husbands spend on household chores for each family type by whether the wife/mother is employed or not. These are represented by the bottom two rows of small hexagons. Those mothers who are not employed spend between 45 and 52 hours per week on household chores. Mothers who are employed at least 30 hours per week spend from 32 to 37 hours per week on household chores. Thus, time and energy devoted to employment reduce the hours mothers spend on household chores, regardless of family type.

Some of the reduction in time spent on household chores by employed mothers may be offset by their husbands, when they are present. Figure 1 shows the hours husbands spend on household chores when their wife is not employed compared to when she is employed at least 30 hours per week. The figure shows that husbands of employed wives contribute more hours per week than husbands of nonemployed wives. On a proportional basis, the difference is substantial. Husbands spend between 40% and 50% more time on household chores when their wives are employed 30 or more hours per week. Still, husbands' efforts are a small proportion of the total responsibility. When a mother takes on employment of 30 or more hours per week, it appears the father adds 4 to 5 hours per week to the household chores he contributes. Thus; although the difference between the amount

of housework done by husbands of employed mothers and those of nonemployed mothers is statistically significant, the difference (4 to 5 hours) is substantively small. Expressed in terms of work week days, when the mother works for pay at least 6 hours per day, the father works on housework an additional 30 to 40 minutes per day.

Figure 1 reflects this by the small size of the hexagons that represent the husband's contribution compared to the large hexagons that represent the wife's contribution. A more substantively (and statistically) significant difference is the greater amount of housework performed by mothers (employed or not) in all family types compared to that of their husbands.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this article we explored many aspects of the division of household labor. Corroborating previous studies, we found that mothers devote the vast proportion of time and labor on most household chores (Berk, 1985; Kamo, 1988; Mederer, 1993; Warner, 1986). This finding holds across family types. Excluding two tasks that are done infrequently and require little time, mothers in all family types provide 68% to 95% of the time needed for household tasks. Further, it is likely that the numbers presented here underestimate women's domestic labor. Women invest substantial time ensuring that their family's needs are met, much of which is devoted to invisible labor. Beyond time spent in the actual execution of tasks, such as dishwashing and doing laundry, they also spend substantial and immeasurable amounts of time thinking about and planning to do various household tasks (DeVault, 1987; Mederer, 1993). Much of this invisible labor devoted to planning activities and family caregiving is not reflected in these data.

Domestic work by husbands (when present) or cohabiting partners is modest, and household work by children is negligible. Mothers spend between 40 and 44 hours per week on household labor across family types, husbands (or partners) average 13 hours per week, and children under 19 average 3 to 6 hours per week doing household chores. Children in single-parent households and children in stepfamilies perform more housework than their peers in first-married two-parent families. One explanation for these findings is that single-parent family arrangements necessitate greater housework contributions by children (Weiss, 1979). It may be that single mothers have higher expectations for children's housework. These expectations and family routines then carry over to their stepfamilies. The limited research that has examined children's contributions to household labor suggest that, as with adults, gender is a critical variable. The evidence suggests that daughters, especially teenage daughters, do substantially more household chores than other children (Berk, 1985; Goldscheider & Waite, 1991). The responsibilities of daughters may be greatest in single-parent families (Michelson, 1985). Unfortunately, limitations of the data prevent us from exploring these and other distinctions in the housework of children.

The absence of a husband does not significantly increase the time the mother spends on most tasks, although it does increase the percentage of the total household labor she does. It appears that husbands produce about the same amount of additional work for their wives as they provide in return. At least for families with dependent-aged children then, mothers' domestic labor is extensive, and the father's presence or absence does not affect the time mothers spend on household chores.

Among married couples with children, even when women provide such a disproportionate share of the effort, they typically respond that the work is "fairly divided." Women report greater equity when married to men who do a larger share of housework than most men, even though most of these men are doing far less housework than their wives. These findings support the conclusion that women and men continue to devalue housework, to view it as "women's work" (Szinovacz, 1984; Thompson & Walker, 1989), and to make within-gender comparisons that serve to undermine women's sense of fairness and entitlement (Thompson, 1991).

Further evidence for this conclusion is provided by comparing families with employed and nonemployed mothers. This comparison shows that, across family types, employment reduces the hours mothers spend on household chores. But even when their wives are employed, husbands' efforts are still a small proportion of the

total responsibility. When a mother takes on employment of 30 or more hours per week, the father adds 4 to 5 hours per week to the household chores he does. It appears that many husbands lack sufficient appreciation for the importance of household chores to become more involved themselves. The clear and consistent pattern is that, across all family types, mothers (whether employed or not) do two to three times more housework than their husbands or cohabiting partners.

These findings highlight an important and seemingly unrelenting pattern of family life-women's family labor. In the face of enormous social change over the past 3 decades, and with the accompanying popular interest in how families have been reshaped by changing gender roles, by steady increases in female labor force involvement, and by growing diversity in family structure, women's domestic labor has remained at a constant and substantial level. Considering housework specifically (that is, excluding child care and other aspects of family labor), husbands in the 1960s invested 9 hours per week, while wives devoted roughly 34 hours weekly (Coverman & Sheley, 1986). Data from the current study, collected in the late 1980s, show modest increases in men's household labor (from 9 to 13 hours per week), as well as modest increases in women's housework (varying from 40 to 44 hours weekly depending on family type). The increases over time, for both women and men, could be an artifact of different samples and measures. Still, the fact that women continue to do two to three times as much nonwage family labor as their husbands or partners is compelling evidence that family labor remains gendered and that popular descriptions of changes in marital, family, and gender roles are overstated.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

As we approach the 21st century, family life education requires systematic attention to and appreciation of diversity in contemporary families. Teachers, counselors, and other family professionals must be aware of the insidious influence of traditional nuclear family ideology (Demo, 1993; Thorne, 1992). Equally important, they need to recognize dimensions and patterns of family life that have not changed in recent decades. It is essential that educational programs be based on accurate empirical information describing the realities of American families, and that they are guided by strong theoretical frameworks for interpreting and explaining these realities (Arcus, 1992). Family life education can be strengthened through application of a feminist perspective that integrates theory and practice and that emphasizes and values both diversity and equality in contemporary family life (Allen & Baber, 1992).

Families have always been much more diverse than is suggested by the nostalgia associated with the monolithic nuclear family of the 1950s and early 1960s. Growing diversity in family structure means that most families no longer resemble this idealized family form. Yet many family processes, dynamics, and arrangements characterizing traditional families have changed very little. In particular, women continue to do the vast majority of household labor. Prevailing paradigms that focus on popular concepts such as family change and role change obscure more complex dynamics. For example, although further research is necessary to substantiate our conclusion, it appears that many men are doing more housework than men did in the 1960s. Class discussions of this change must incorporate and be sensitive to a series of related, often overlooked, and more important pat-terns-that while some men are doing substantially more housework than their predecessors a generation ago, most men are doing only slightly more; that most women are doing more housework than their predecessors and substantially more than their husbands or male partners, and that a focus on how men have changed masks persisting aspects of gender inequality.

The work women and men do in families needs to be recognized and valued, not trivialized. Teachers must teach and students must learn that family labor is necessary and important and that it is more than women's work. Boys continue to be taught that housework is not important and, in many households, they are asked to do very little of it (Berk, 1985; Goldscheider & Waite, 1991). Sons are also more resistant than daughters to assume housework responsibilities in families where mothers are employed (Goldscheider & Waite, 1991). To challenge prevailing assumptions, debunk myths, and foster a learning environment in which equality is firmly valued, "educators and practitioners must think, teach, and act in ways that will bring change in their own lives, the lives of those they teach and serve, and in society" (Allen & Baber, 1992, p. 379). To communicate the importance of household labor, to convey the complexities of contemporary patterns in the division of

housework, and to illustrate how these arrangements are related to marital and family dynamics, these topics must be an integral part of courses on contemporary families. Lectures and readings combining quantitative and qualitative accounts could be used as a springboard for class discussion. Students could be asked to describe the housework they did as young children and adolescents, to delineate the family labor done by mothers and fathers, and to reflect on which family members' interests (and careers) were best served by these arrangements.

Family therapists are likely to see many female clients who are quite angry about their marital or cohabiting relationships. Many of these women may be confused and distraught because of the contradictions between the images and messages in the popular culture that portray contemporary relationships as egalitarian, and the burdensome, oppressive reality of their own lives. The men with whom these women live may hold egalitarian beliefs and attitudes, and they may feel righteous because they do more housework than their fathers did. The women may feel angry and exhausted because they do all the family labor their mothers did, while at the same time managing the responsibilities associated with paid employment. Importantly, the division of housework is associated with women's, but not men's, marital and personal happiness (Thompson & Walker, 1989). For wives, lower marital satisfaction and personal well-being are associated with husbands' unwillingness to share in household labor (Pleck, 1985; Staines & Libby, 1986).

Premarriage and marriage counselors need to help couples develop strategies to negotiate housework and housework standards. For example, who decides who does the laundry, who decides how the laundry shall be done, and who decides when it shall be done? Hawkins and Roberts (1992) argue that for interventions of this kind to be effective, they must focus on couples rather than individuals. They suggest several strategies for increasing male involvement and facilitating equity, including strengthening marital communication, encouraging wives to request involvement by their husbands, helping wives to relinquish responsibility for housework, and connecting housework with child care.

Increasing family diversity has not changed the division of domestic labor. The composition and structure of American families have changed in many widely documented ways, but other patterns are firmly established and resistant to change. Family life educators have a responsibility to recognize and distinguish those aspects of family experience that have changed and those that have not. In the process, students will learn to identify social problems, they will become more sensitive to enduring aspects of inequality, and they will be better prepared to assess and reassess their own values and experiences.

- Key Words: domestic labor, family structure, feminism, housework

Table 1. Percentage of Household Chores Done by Mothers, Controlling for Covariates					
Legend for Chart:					
A - Household Task					
B - First Marriage; Percentage of Chore Done by Mother					
C - Divorced; Percentage of Chore Done by Mother					
D - Step families; Percentage of Chore Done by Mother					
E - Never Married; Percentage of Chore Done by Mother					
F - Significance[A]					
A	B	C	D	E	F
Preparing meals	83.5% (1,111)	89.0% (652)	80.2% (264)	88.7% (394)	abcd f
Washing dishes	78.8 (1,076)	80.4 (618)	70.2 (259)	83.8 (388)	bcdef
Cleaning house	82.8 (1,092)	81.8 (634)	78.0 (266)	83.7 (393)	b d f

Outdoor work[B]	30.7 (766)	75.9 (418)	29.5 (207)	78.0 (183)	a cd f
Shopping	79.6 (1,086)	93.8 (649)	76.5 (263)	94.6 (397)	abcd f
Laundry	98.3 (1,104)	90.2 (645)	83.7 (270)	89.2 (394)	b d f
Paying bills	79.5 (1,001)	95.1 (646)	71.2 (252)	93.8 (378)	a ed f
Car maintenance[B]	7.0 (573)	83.9 (284)	9.5 (146)	85.7 (90)	a cd f
Driving	67.6 (785)	93.7 (470)	67.7 (224)	91.6 (163)	a cd f
TOTAL	70.1 (781)	87.0 (526)	67.8 (177)	86.2 (324)	a cd f

Note. The numbers appearing in parentheses are the sample sizes on which each percentage is based.

[A] Letters are used to show which comparisons are significant at the .05 level. An "a" indicates first marrieds are different from divorced, "b" indicates first marrieds are different from stepfamily mothers, "c" indicates first marrieds are different from never married, "d" indicates divorced are different from stepfamilies, "e" that divorced are different from never married, "f" that stepfamilies are different from never married. Covariates are whether the respondent was in the oversampled population or not, the household's total income, mother's education, mother's race, mother's age, hours per week the mother is employed, the number of people living in the household, age of the youngest child, and, for single parents, whether the mother was cohabiting at the time of the interview.

[B] The number of mothers for these items is unusually low. It is possible that mothers who spend no time on these activities skipped the items. Such cases would constitute missing data and are dropped from the analysis.

Table 2. Hours of Household Chores Performed Per Week by Mothers

Legend for Chart:

A - Household Task

B - First Marriage; Hours Mother Spends

C - Divorced; Hours Mother Spends

D - Stepfamilies; Hours Mother Spends

E - Never Married; Hours Mother Spends

F - Significance[A]

A	B	C	D	E	F
Preparing meals	10.6 (1,114)	10.5 (655)	10.1 (265)	10.3 (395)	ns
Washing dishes	6.8 (1,079)	7.0 (620)	6.3 (259)	7.0 (390)	ns
Cleaning house	9.6 (1,100)	9.9 (639)	9.5 (267)	8.6 (393)	e
Outdoor work[B]	1.9 (882)	2.3 (608)	1.9 (225)	2.1 (369)	ns
Shopping	3.0 (1,089)	3.4 (650)	3.3 (263)	3.4 (399)	a
Laundry	4.8 (1,114)	5.0 (652)	5.0 (271)	4.9 (401)	ns
Paying bills	1.9 (1,013)	2.2 (654)	2.1 (253)	2.3 (396)	a c
Car maintenance[B]	.2	.6	.3	.6a	cd f

	(797)	(622)	(198)	(363)	
Driving	2.2 (1,041)	3.3 (649)	2.4 (258)	2.2 (372)	a de
TOTAL	41.3 (720)	43.9 (529)	40.5 (178)	40.3 (325)	ns

Note. The numbers appearing in parentheses are the sample sizes on which each percentage is based.

[A] Letters are used to show which comparisons are significant at the .05 level. An "a" indicates first marrieds are different from divorced, "b" indicates first marrieds are different from stepfamily mothers, "c" indicates first marrieds are different from never married, "d" indicates divorced are different from stepfamilies, "e" that divorced are different from never married, "f" that stepfamilies are different from never married. Covariates are whether the respondent was in the oversampled population or not, the household's total income, mother's education, mother's race, mother's age, hours per week the mother is employed, the number of people living in the household, age of the youngest child, and, for single parents, whether the mother was cohabiting at the time of the interview.

[B] The number of mothers for these items is unusually low. It is possible that mothers who spend no time on these activities skipped the items. Such cases would constitute missing data and are dropped from the analysis.

Table 3. Hours of Household Chores Performed Per Week by Husbands and Children, Controlling for Covariates

Legend for Chart:

- A - Household Task
- B - First Marriage; Hours Husband
- C - First Marriage; Hours Child < 19 years old
- D - Divorced; Hours Child < 19 years old
- E - Stepfamily; Hours Husband
- F - Stepfamily; Hours Child < 19 years old
- G - Never Married; Hours Child < 19 years old
- H - Significance[A]; Husband
- I - Significance[A]; Hours Child < 19 years old

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Preparing meals	1.7	.4	1.0	2.0	.6	.8	ns	abcd
Washing dishes	1.1	.8	1.7	1.2	1.6	1.0	ns	ab ef
Cleaning house	1.2	.8	1.7	1.1	1.2	1.1	ns	abcde
Outdoor work	3.7	.5	.8	3.6	.7	.7	ns	a
Shopping	.9	.1	.2	1.1	.1	.1	b	a de
Laundry	.4	.2	.4	.5	.4	.4	ns	abc
Paying bills	.9	.0	.0	1.0	.0	.0	ns	ns
Car maintenance	1.6	.0	.0	1.5	.0	.1	ns	ns
Driving	1.2	.1	.1	1.2	.1	.1	e	ns
TOTAL	12.7	2.9	5.9	13.3	4.8	4.3	ns	abcde
nB	1,153	1,153	677	275	275	419	--	--

[A] Letters are used to show which comparisons are significant at the .05 level. An "a" indicates first marrieds are different from divorced, "b" indicates first marrieds are different from stepfamily mothers, "c" indicates first marrieds are different from never married, "d" indicates divorced are different from stepfamilies, "e" that divorced are different from never married, "f" that stepfamilies are different from never married. Covariates are whether the respondent was in the oversampled population or not, the household's total income, mother's education, mother's race, mother's age, hours per week the mother is employed, the number of people living in the household; age of the youngest child, and, for single parents, whether the mother was cohabiting at the time of the interview.

[B] Sample sizes for individual items (tasks) varied due to missing data.

Table 4. Hours of Household Chores Performed Per Week by Cohabiting Partners and Others Over 19 Years Old, Controlling for Covariates

Legend for Chart:

- A - Household Task
- B - First Marriage; Hours Others > 19 years old
- C - Divorced; Cohabiting Partner
- D - Divorced; Hours Others > 19 years old
- E - Step family; Hours Others > 19 years old
- F - Never Married; Cohabiting Partner
- G - Never Married; Hours Others > 19 years old
- H - Significance[A]; Hours Others > 19 years old
- I - Significance[A]; Cohabiting Partner

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Preparing meals	.1	2.0	.4	.0	2.1	.4	a cd f	ns
Washing dishes	.1	1.0	.3	.0	1.1	.3	a cd f	ns
Cleaning house	.1	.8	.4	.0	1.5	.4	a cd f	ns
Outdoor work	.1	3.6	.1	.0	2.5	.2	abcd f	ns
Shopping	.0	.6	.1	.0	1.0	.2	abcdef	ns
Laundry	.0	.3	.2	.0	.5	.2	a cd f	ns
Paying bills	.0	.9	.0	.0	1.0	.1	a cdef	ns
Car maintenance	.0	2.3	.0	.0	1.7	.1	cd f	ns
Driving	.0	1.8	.1	.0	1.1	.1	a c f	ns
TOTAL	.5	13.3	1.7	.0	12.5	2.0	a cd f	ns
nB	1,153	70	677	277	72	419	--	--

[A] Letters are used to show which comparisons are significant at the .05 level. An "a" indicates first marrieds are different from divorced, "b" indicates first marrieds are different from stepfamily mothers, "c" indicates first marrieds are different from never married, "d" indicates divorced are different from stepfamilies, "e" that divorced are different from never married, "f" that stepfamilies are different from never married. Covariates are whether the respondent was in the oversampled population or not, the household's total income, mother's education, mother's race, mother's age, hours per week the mother is employed, the number of people living in the household; age of the youngest child, and, for single parents, whether the mother was cohabiting at the time of the interview.

[B] Sample sizes for individual items (tasks) varied due to missing data.

Figure 1. Mother's and Their Husbands' Hours on Chores by Mothers' Work Status (Not Employed vs. Employed 30+ Hours)

	Mother	Husband
1st Marriage		
Mother not employed	45.4	14.7
Mother employed	37.2	10.4
Divorced		
Mother not employed	52.3	--
Mother employed	36.5	--
Stepfamily		
Mother not employed	49.7	15.5
Mother employed	35.1	10.9
Never Married		
Mother not employed	50	--
Mother employed	32.5	--

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