

FATHERS' CHANGING PERFORMANCE OF HOUSEWORK: A BIGGER SLICE OF A SMALLER PIE

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ABSTRACT

The amount of time devoted to housework was measured for both fathers and mothers residing in a southwestern community within the United States during 1989 and 1994. A scientific random sample was used and respondents were interviewed by telephone. The findings were compared to measures and results from studies dating back to the 1920s. The contention that today's fathers are taking on more family duties than their predecessors and that wives' employment is a primary causal factor were assessed. Compared to earlier studies, the findings show that today's couples devote less time to housework. Within this declining trend a contradictory pattern emerged for fathers. While their proportional contributions to housework consistently increased, simultaneously the amount of time fathers spent has varied very little. This pattern suggests a trend toward parity with mothers. The exception was Southwestern fathers whose wives were employed. They spent less time doing housework than fathers who were the sole earners in the family. The most important factor contributing to parents doing an equal amount of housework was the reduction in time spent by mothers.

INTRODUCTION

Changes in the lives of both women and men and their families since the turn of the century have led to many reassessments of family roles. As education and employment levels have risen for women, discontent has increased with the family's traditional gender-based division of labor (Furstenberg 1988). The traditional view, that husbands should be aloof and take the role of a distant authority figure whose major family responsibility is working outside the home, has been increasingly challenged (Demos 1986). A common result has been demands for husbands to spend more time with their families especially after children arrive.

Such demands have been expressed in surveys of both men and women who report that family roles should be less gender specific and family responsibilities shared (Furstenberg 1988). However, there is a lack of scientific research verifying a comparable shift in parents' behavior away from traditional patterns. The 1960s marked the beginning of an intense scientific focus on fathers' family participation and possible explanations for it (LeMasters, DeFrain 1989).

Theoretical explanations for the family's division of labor have focused upon differences between husbands and wives' resources, ideologies, and available time. Resource explanations emphasize differences in income and education between spouses (Ross 1987), ideology emphasizes beliefs about gender role expectations (Kamo 1988), and available time emphasizes time apart from hours spent in employment (Pleck 1985; Walker, Woods 1976). Research support for these

explanatory factors has been weak and contradictory (Coltrane, Ishii-Kuntz 1992). Further most studies have not considered connections between these factors (Pyke, Coltrane 1996).

This study examines fathers' contributions to housework, the effect of mothers' employment upon these contributions, other contributors to housework, and the findings' implications for the married couples' resources, ideology, and available time. Further these contributions are considered in a historical frame. Most previous studies have ignored the history of housework which is essential to understanding change. Information gathered in 1989 and 1994 on housework patterns for married parents, especially fathers, are compared to related research completed since the 1920s. No longitudinal studies compare parents' performance throughout this period but a few studies provide related results on housework. Thus, two questions are addressed: Are today's fathers doing more housework than their predecessors? and, To what extent are they sharing housework with mothers?

METHODOLOGY

Measurement Issues in Previous Studies

Studies of housework typically emphasize the same type of tasks including cooking, cleaning, repairs, yard work, and handling finances. Unfortunately, specific definitions vary a good deal (Gershuny, Robinson 1988; Ishii-Kuntz, Coltrane 1992). Child care and shopping have occasionally been included as housework but not consistently. Since most studies count child care and shopping time as separate from housework time, unless

otherwise noted, all housework amounts presented exclude these activities.

Typically, family care studies have either used a reconstruction technique or diaries to gather data on housework. Reconstruction asks respondents to estimate how much time they spent on housework all together for a specified time period such as a week. When few, if any, specific housework task examples are identified for the respondents, they are more likely to under report time. Similar studies using reconstruction, like the 1989 and 1994 surveys, include the 1924 and 1978 Middletown surveys (Caplow, Bahr, Chadwick, Hill, Williamson 1982) and the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey (Pleck 1985). Additional data are drawn from the Study of Time Use diary based surveys (Juster 1985; Pleck 1985; Robinson 1985). In these surveys unlike reconstruction, respondents record in diaries each activity when it is performed, along with the starting and ending time, for different days of the week. The list of household tasks is usually lengthy and specific.

The more detailed measurement techniques result in larger reported time amounts devoted to housework. The highest amount reported comes from the most inclusive Quality of Employment Survey. The respondents estimated time spent separately on workdays and non-workdays for a very encompassing, detailed list of "home chores" which included all the items listed above and shopping (Pleck 1985). From the more recent Study of Time Use surveys, the smallest amounts come from the only available panel study completed in 1975 and 1981. These housework amounts excluded both shopping (including related travel) and obtaining services. Adding these to husbands reported "total" housework figures results in amounts for the panel fathers closer to the other national studies (Juster 1985). As these details suggest comparisons across studies are problematic and must be made with caution.

The Data

In both 1989 and 1994, relying upon reconstruction, time estimates were gathered from parents via a random sample telephone survey in a mid-sized southwestern city within the United States, referred to as Southwestern City. The concept measured in the survey instrument and treated as the dependent variable was time spent on housework. The concepts measured in the survey instrument and

treated as independent variables were gender and employment status. Related concepts measured were children's contributions to housework, use of paid help, and fathers' time devoted to child care. The time questions used were similar to those in the Housewives' Survey (#11) of the Middletown III Project:

How much time do you guess you spend doing work in and around your home? _____ hours per week

How much time do you guess your (husband/wife) spends doing work in and around your home? _____ hours per week

How much time (does/do) your child(ren) spend doing work in and around your home? _____ hours per week.

(Caplow et al 1982)

Both average amounts of time family members spent on housework and their proportional contributions were calculated. To provide similar data from some earlier studies a recalculation of reported data had to be performed. For example, several studies, using a broader housework definition, broke down their total times by task types. Hence the time spent on tasks not included in our definition (child care) could be dropped and more comparable total amounts could be calculated. Also for quite a few studies the fathers' proportional contribution had to be either calculated because it was not reported or recalculated because a different formula was used. The Southwestern City fathers' percentages are based upon how much they contributed to housework out of the total time spent by both mother and father added together. Many studies based the fathers' percentage upon their housework contribution as a proportion of the mothers' contribution. The former percentages are preferred because they allow an immediate reading to how close fathers are to the goal of parity or a 50/50 split with mothers. Even when recalculations are not possible, proportions of contribution rather than amounts of time are the most comparable across studies using different operational definitions. Details on each survey's procedures and definitions are available in either reviews by Robinson (1985) and Pleck (1985) or the original sources.

Southwestern City Samples

Both the 1989 and 1994 random telephone surveys gathered information from parents who had at least one child under the age

of 19 living in their home. Each survey's procedure was identical except for the selection of telephone numbers. In 1989 a total of 2008 telephone numbers were systematically selected from randomly selected pages from the city's current directory. Whether to request an interview with a father or mother was predetermined by alternately assigning telephone numbers as they were randomly selected. Telephone numbers were called up to four times over several weeks. Among the 314 households contacted containing an eligible parent, 57 percent or 180 persons agreed to participate (121 were mothers and 59 were fathers). In 1994, 2,474 randomly generated telephone numbers (random digit dialing) were called to reach 217 appropriate households. From these 134 interviews (90 mothers, 42 fathers, and 2 parenting partners) were completed for a 62 percent completion rate. (Further details on both surveys are available from the authors.)

Sample Characteristics.

Unlike most other studies, this economical and efficient sampling procedure resulted in respondents representing all segments of the population. Still, while minority (African Americans) and smaller groups (poor families) were included, they were under represented. In both samples the parents typically were white (91% in 1989 and 82% in 1994), mothers (67% in both samples), in their first marriage (63% and 68%), around 37 years old, employed (74% and 81%), college graduates (43% and 54%), middle class (80% and 85%), reported a family income over \$40,000, and city residents for over 11 years. Available census data for Southwestern City in 1990 provide a barometer of how representative the samples were. Eighty percent of the city's families with children under 18 were white; 36 percent of those over age 25 had graduated from college; and the median income reported for 1989 by all families was \$35,840 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992a, 1992b). Thus the samples contained a somewhat higher proportion of whites, the college educated, and families with higher incomes. Consistent with previous studies on the division of family housework only data for married parents where the father is employed were analyzed (N=139 in 1989 and 109 in 1994).

PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND SOUTHWESTERN CITY FINDINGS

Several sources suggest that today's married parents devote less time to housework than parents in the past. Middletown housewives with a husband and at least one child at home in 1924 reported doing much more housework than comparable housewives surveyed in 1978. Nothing is known about the 1924 fathers' housework because Robert and Helen Lynd (1956), like most early researchers, neither interviewed husbands on family matters nor asked the housewives about their husbands' housework. But the trend is clear for mothers. In 1924 very few Middletown housewives (11%) spent less than 4 hours a day on routine housework. By 1978 the majority of housewives (56%) reported doing less than 4 hours of housework daily (Caplow et al 1982). In 1989, 66 percent of Southwestern City mothers reported doing less than 4 hours of housework daily. The 1994 Southwestern City mothers' represent another major increase in this proportion with 81 percent reporting that they did less than an average of 4 hours of housework daily.

Early time-use-studies further document this time demise (Robinson 1985). For example, in the 1960s much less time was spent on routine aspects of housework (cleaning) than in the 1930s. Reports from 1975 time diaries compared to those from 1965 suggest the continuation of this trend. Women in 1975 devoted substantially less time to housework, regardless of their employment (or even marital status). Much of the reduction can be attributed to spending less time on routine housework activities, such as cleaning and upkeep (Robinson 1985). Only managerial aspects of housework, including shopping and child rearing, increased during this period.

Trends for fathers' contributions to housework can be gleaned indirectly from some early time-use-studies. They report figures for family care which included housework along with child care. Studies from the 1930s, 1950s, and 1960s reported fathers performed approximately 4 to 6 hours per week of family care. Out of the time spent by fathers and mothers, this represented a proportional contribution of less than one-fifth of total family care effort (Robinson 1985). More recent, national probability samples indicate married fathers have increased both the amount and proportion of family care provided. Fathers surveyed in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s

Table 1: Married Employed Fathers' Proportion of Total Time Both Parents Devoted to Housework and Mean Hours Fathers Spent Per Week, 1975 to 1994

	Juster's Data*		Southwestern City Surveys**	
	1975	1981	1989	1994
Year data gathered	1975	1981	1989	1994
Percent of housework	26	28	32	29
Mean hours a week	7.6	8.3	8.0	8.9
Sample size	119	119	180	134
Sample frame	National (panel)		City	
*Juster 1985				
**Southwestern City probability samples, in 1989 based upon 139 couples and in 1994 upon 109 couples.				

reported devoting averages ranging from 11 to 15 hours per week to family care with proportions consistently increasing from 20 percent to almost 30 percent (Juster 1985). Comparable figures for the Southwestern City fathers' contributions in 1989 and 1994 suggest the continuation of this upward trend with means of 18 and 25 hours spent on family care or housework combined with child care. These represent, in both cases, 35 percent of the combined amount of time spent by the married couples on family care. Of course this does not necessarily mean that fathers' amounts and proportional contribution to housework have increased over time.

Less data are available for fathers' performance of housework and the trends are not consistent with those for family care. Early data on fathers' housework, excluding other family care, come from a panel study (Table 1). In 1975 the fathers reported doing a mean of 7.6 hours of housework per week and when resurveyed in 1981 they reported doing a bit more with a mean of 8.3 hours or 43 minutes of additional housework (Juster 1985). Two national studies conducted in the 1970s reported larger amounts for husbands' housework, however, the measures used were much more inclusive (Pleck 1985). The Southwestern City fathers in 1989 and 1994 reported doing an average of 8 and 8.5 hours of housework per week. While the actual amounts of time spent doing housework are similar to earlier studies, an examination of proportional contributions shows Southwestern City fathers' did a greater proportion of housework. More specifically fathers' proportional contributions (32% and 29%) were higher than those

reported for all earlier studies. Further these findings from the Southwestern City survey are similar to those found in at least one other recent study (Pyke, Coltrane 1996). Fathers' proportional contributions to housework, like those to family care, has consistently risen over time. An explanation for much of the fathers' higher proportions can be found when learning that mothers spent less time on housework than in the past. Mothers' doing less housework reduced the total amount of family time spent on housework, so that fathers' actual time spent on housework became a larger percentage of the total family time.

The times for both Southwestern City parents are presented in Table 2. Combining these means provides a comparable total time that parents devoted to housework. Although the 1994 amount is slightly larger than the 1989 figure, both total times are less than the amounts reported for the 1970s and support the trend of a continued decline in amount of time devoted to housework.

It is reasonable to suspect that paid outsiders have taken over some housework, especially for jointly employed parents. *Paid help* would reduce the pressure both on overloaded employed mothers and on employed fathers to do housework. However, the data do not support this. Parents reliance upon substitute paid help has apparently declined since the turn of the century. As the interviewed Middletown housewives reported in 1924, it was their parents who were the most likely to use hired help. Especially among the business class, housewives reported that for their mothers in 1890, those without full-time paid help with housework (34%) were the exception (Caplow et al 1982). In stark contrast the majority (74%) of the 1924 housewives' families had no paid help at all with housework. In 1978 even more Middletown housewives (87%) reported using no paid help. An identical proportion of the Southwestern City mothers in 1989 reported using no paid help. The 1994 Southwestern City mothers broke the downward trend in hired help but the vast majority (73%) reported getting no outside help. Paid help has become and remains the exception.

Those hiring help only used it sparingly. For the 13 percent of the Southwestern City mothers in 1989 who reported paid help with housework, it was used for no more than 5 hours per week with the average amount of use being for 2.6 hours. Although more than twice as many Southwestern City mothers (27%) in

Table 2: Hours Married Mothers and Fathers Spent Per Week on Housework, Broken Down by Employment Status of Mothers When Husband Employed, and Fathers' Percentage of Parents' Total Time Spent for 1989 and 1994

Housework	Employment Status of Couples with Husband Employed								
	Mothers' Means	Fathers' Means	Fathers' %	Mothers		Fathers		Fathers' %	
				Husband Only	Both	Husband Only	Both	Husband Only	Both
Hours per Week									
1989	17.3*	8.0*	32	22.8*	14.1*	9.0	7.5	28	35
1994	20.1*	8.9*	29	25.7*	17.4	9.5	8.5	27	33
Number of Cases									
1989	85	55		31	54	17	37		
1994	70	39		20	48	13	24		

*F ratio significant for mean differences at .05 or less.

Source: Southwestern City probability samples, 1989 & 1994.

1994 used paid help, it again was used sparingly (the average amount used was 5.3 hours per week and only two mothers reported more than 6 hours of use). Hence paid help was not a factor in the housework efforts for almost all Southwestern City families.

Another reasonable alternative housework might be *children*. Unlike paid help, almost all Southwestern City mothers (93%) in 1989 reported that children did at least some housework. However the time amounts reported were rather small. Over 60 percent of the mothers reported that their children did no more than 3 hours of housework per week with the average amount contributed per week being 3.6 hours. Again in 1994, almost all Southwestern City mothers (90%) reported children doing some housework but the amounts were somewhat higher. Less than half (44%) of the mothers reported that their children did not more than 3 hours of housework per week and the average amount contributed was 5.3 hours. Hence although more widespread, the children's average amounts do not exceed the average amounts for paid help when used. Help with housework by children was minimal in most Southwestern City families.

Even though Southwestern City parents are doing less housework overall than their predecessors, mothers still do the lion's share of housework (Table 2) with 17.3 hours per week spent on housework in 1989 and 20.1 hours in 1994. This is over twice as much time as that spent by the fathers (8 and 8.9 hours respectively). Despite fathers' growing proportional contributions, the time amounts make clear that parity is a long way off.

The Middletown housewives' data allow for one additional means of examining the issue of *parity* between parents by using responses from a question on how housework was distributed between the couples. Citing women's employment trends and pressure from the women's liberation movement, Caplow et al (1982) expected to find evidence from the 1978 survey of a shift toward a more equal distribution of housework between spouses. Surprisingly almost half of the surveyed Middletown wives (45%) reported doing all the housework and another 40 percent said they did most of the housework. Less than one tenth of the families reported an arrangement with housekeeping shared equally. Southwestern City mothers reported somewhat more parity. In 1989 15 percent reported that they and their husbands devoted the same amount of time to housework and for 1994 it was up to 22 percent. The proportion among employed mothers in 1994 was even higher at 29 percent. While still the exception, the increasing rate suggests a shift toward more parity. On the other hand, in 1989 almost as many Southwestern City husbands (12%) were reported to be making no housework contributions at all. Even among husbands reported as doing some housework, the majority (53%) did only 5 hours or less a week. While far fewer husbands (3%) in 1994 were cited as doing no housework, as in 1989 the majority (50%) performed only 5 hours or less.

The impact of *mothers' employment* upon fathers' housework efforts has been studied at least since the 1950s. Early research on fathers' response to employed wives relied heavily upon either Blood and Wolfe's (1960) task

Table 3: Married Employed Fathers' Proportion of Total Time Both Parents Devoted to Housework by Wives' Employment Status and Mean of Hours Fathers Spent Per Week, 1975 to 1994

	1975-76*		1989**		1994**	
	Husband Only Earner	Both Spouses Earners	Husband Only Earner	Both Spouses Earners	Husband Only Earner	Both Spouses Earners
Housework %	22	32	28	35	27	33
Mean hours per week	11.1	11.4	9.0	7.5	9.5	8.5
Sample Size	2406		180		134	
Sample Frame	National		City		City	

*Figures based upon data cited in Pleck (1985).

**Southwestern City probability sample, 1989 and 1994.

distribution approach (husband or wife always, one spouse more than the other, or spouses do exactly the same) or very unsophisticated measures (Pleck 1985). Although reported "proportions" from this earlier research are not comparable to those presented here, their assessments indicated that fathers with employed wives performed more housework than sole employed fathers.

Early studies gathering time amounts usually did not report housework separately but instead included it as part of family care. Estimates for fathers' proportional participation in family care from a 1950s study were 15 percent when only they were employed versus 25 percent when both they and their wives were employed (Blood, Hamblin 1958). Similar proportions were reported in three major time-use-studies using data gathered between 1964 and 1972 (Meissner, Humphries, Meis, Scheu 1975; Robinson 1977; Walker, Woods 1976). Despite the consistently higher proportions reported for fathers with employed wives in these studies, these fathers were not necessarily doing more family care. In fact these fathers' higher proportions were often due to employed mothers spending much less time doing family care than their unemployed counterparts (Pleck 1985). When both parents were employed, the total time devoted to family care was less and consequently the fathers' actual time became a larger proportion of the total. In the 1970s a different pattern emerged. Several large samples, including the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, documented significant increments in hours fathers' spent in family care when wives were employed. Studies from the 1980s found further increases in fathers' proportional contribution and in some cases even in the amount of time they spent when they were in dual

earner families (Pleck 1985). Of course these patterns do not necessarily mean that fathers' housework practices followed the same trend.

Although not as much comparable data are available on housework, the trends appear to be similar. Fathers' proportional contributions to housework were consistently higher when wives were employed (Table 3). Fathers whose wives were employed do proportionally 6 percent to 10 percent more of the housework than those who were sole-earners. But the amounts often show an inconsistent and different pattern. Unlike the 1975-76 national study and many early studies, the Southwestern City fathers in dual earner families reported spending less time on housework than fathers who were sole earners. This was true for both the 1989 and 1994 samples. The greatest difference occurred in 1989 where fathers with employed wives reported spending on average about 16 percent fewer hours on housework than fathers whose wives were not employed.

Ironically, the smallest mean reported for fathers (7.5 hours for 1989) is the basis for the highest proportional contributions to housework by fathers (35%) found in the research. For this to happen, two things must occur. First, dual employed parents must do substantially less housework than that performed by parents where only the fathers are employed. As the figures in Table 2 confirm, the Southwestern City dual employed couples in 1989 spent on average about two-thirds (or 68%) as many hours on housework than the couples where only fathers were employed. Second, the proportion of housework performed by employed mothers' when compared to the amount of time spent by women not employed must be even smaller, which it was at 62 percent, than the comparable one for couples.

The same pattern occurred for 1994 but was not quite as dramatic.

If fathers with employed wives are failing to do more housework maybe their *children's participation* is greater. When employed mothers, by necessity, reduce the time devoted to housework, some of the tasks may get shifted to the children. But children's reported contributions to housework broken down by employment status of mothers resulted in unexpected patterns. First, the average amounts of time reported were very small varying from 3 to 5 hours or around one half or less of the time spent by fathers. Second, the differences between children of employed versus unemployed mothers were very small (less than one hour). Finally, in 1989 the time children spend doing housework was greater when mothers were not employed. Although unexpected, these findings are in line with Benin and Edwards' (1990) analysis of Juster's 1975-1981 panel study data which found children's contributions minimal and found that children did more chores in families where the mothers did not work. Again the impact of children's contributions appears to have been minimal even when their mothers are employed.

If most fathers and children in families where the mother is not employed do less housework than those in dual earner families, maybe the former families are turning to paid help. But again, an examination of the data shows that paid help played only a minor role regardless of the wives' employment status. Among the minority of Southwestern City families hiring help, the proportion of housework performed by paid help was only slightly higher in dual earner families than in sole earner families (around 2% greater for both 1989 and 1994). These findings further support the contention that paid help has little impact on the total amount of housework performed and that overall less housework is being done in today's homes.

Recent studies, analyzing the kinds of housework parents do, document another aspect of inequity or lack of parity. Even when parents devote the same amount of time to housework, the kinds of tasks are far from equally distributed. Despite the emphasis upon gender equality, Middletown's couples surveyed in 1977 on family role tasks reported dramatic gender differences in line with traditional stereotypes for both expectations and behavior. The behavior or who actually performed tasks was even less equally distributed

than expectations. For example, home repairs were still almost exclusively carried out by husbands, while "keeping house" was the almost exclusive domain of wives (Caplow et al 1982). A detailed analysis of the 1987-88 National Survey of Families and Households found gender-segregated patterns even among those couples in which husbands contributed many hours to housework (Blair, Lichter 1991). Southwestern City mothers' reports in 1994 on how often they cooked for their families suggest the continuation of gender-segregation by task. The majority, regardless of employment status, reported cooking daily. Most fathers reported only cooking occasionally. On the other hand, another contemporary study by Shelton (1990) found that employed wives reduced the amount of traditional female type tasks they performed when compared to wives not working outside the home. However, wives' employment had virtually no impact upon their husbands' performance of specific housework tasks. To further deal with the issue of parity between parents, attention must be paid not only to specific task allocations but to qualitative aspects as well, such as the meanings attached to task performances (Coleman 1988; Pyke, Coltrane 1996).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Four conclusions can be drawn from the evidence presented. First, married, employed fathers perform a larger proportion of housework today than their predecessors. But the amount of time they actually spent doing the housework has only changed modestly and has not always been greater than what fathers did in the past. Second, fathers whose wives are employed do proportionally more housework but usually spend less actual time when compared to fathers who are the sole earners in families. Third, mothers and fathers appear to be moving slowly toward an equal split of time devoted to housework. But most of this convergence is the result of mothers' spending less time doing housework. Mothers do less housework today, primarily because they spend more time in jobs outside the home. Finally, married parents today devote less time to housework than their predecessors.

For those who hold parity as a goal, the Southwestern City fathers' housework patterns are discouraging. While they made some of the highest proportional contributions to housework ever recorded, the Southwestern City fathers devoted less actual time to

housework than many of their predecessors. Plus those fathers whose wives were employed exhibited the greatest discrepancy between higher proportional contributions and fewer hours devoted to housework. These patterns suggest the entrenchment of many traditional ideas and practices. Further very limited help came from alternative sources. Children performed little housework with the lowest amounts often reported in families where both parents were employed. Paid help was used by very few families, regardless of wives' employment status, and then only sparingly.

The most consistent trend is the diminishing amount of time devoted to housework by families. Mothers' contributions have dropped dramatically, fathers' contributions have dropped modestly, and parity between parents is far from being achieved. It is reasonable to suspect that housework's low status and reward value relative to the other daily activities, especially child care, means it gets lower priority and is less likely to get done when a time crunch occurs. This is buttressed by the often heard admonitions to employed couples to reduce their standard of household hygiene (Robinson 1988). Further new household appliances, such as microwave ovens, have actually reduced the amount of time needed for certain basic tasks (Gershuny, Robinson 1988). Most previous housework innovations (washing machines) primarily reduced the amount of physical effort needed.

The emphasis upon greater involvement by fathers since the 1960s has apparently won few converts to the practice of performing more housework. As mothers devote more of their work time to paid employment, fathers are pressured to pick up the resulting slack in family care. But the majority of fathers have failed to pick up the slack especially with regard to housework. Of course, dual employment demands coupled with time saving inventions, such as the dishwasher, make it unrealistic to expect that the substantial amount of time devoted to housework by previous generations will ever be reached again. Still, most Southwestern City fathers were not pioneers in a trek toward equal sharing of housework. Most did even less housework when their wives' were employed. But in other areas of family care, especially child care, fathers appear to be doing more.

In a break from the pattern found for housework, Southwestern City fathers devoted more time to child care than their

predecessors (Seward, Yeatts, Seward, Stanley-Stevens 1993). This is in line with a practice Robinson (1985) found in early time-use-studies. Additional family care by a parent is more likely to be devoted to children rather than housework. Hence fathers' have apparently increased participation but it has been selective. The growing time crunch faced by parents has not brought about across the board changes. The demands of employment and heavier contributions to child care apparently reduced the time, energy, and resources available for housework. Given the choice perhaps parents felt that child care was a more important long term investment. Further the Southwestern City fathers greater involvement with children's activities has the potential of multiple effects upon other areas of the family (Lamb 1987). Fathers performing more child care may reduce mothers' family workload in other areas and potentially strengthen the marital relationship.

To account for the family's present division of labor, the housework evidence presented here provides the most support for the available time or "time crunch" explanation. The rise in employment and job related demands coincides with the overall decline in housework, with the greatest changes occurring for women and with the modest changes occurring for men. Multiple regression analyses on the Southwestern City data reported elsewhere (Seward, Yeatts, Seward 1994) and other current studies (Goldscheider, Waite 1991; Presser 1994; Pyke, Coltrane 1996) found employment times for husbands and especially wives were the best predictors of time spent on housework. Also the persistence of gender differences by tasks suggest, indirectly, that the couples' ideology plays an important explanatory role as well. The next steps are to continue clarifying the specific role these and other factors play and to understand and articulate how they are interrelated.

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