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Division of Labour in the New Zealand Nuclear Family

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This study examined, via self-report, 1 week time diaries, the time spent on household work and the division of labour of 25 married couples where the wife worked and of 25 married couples where the wife was a full-time housewife. Multiple regression analyses showed that the wife working in outside employment, had a much greater impact on her level of household work than her husband's. The division of labour was found to reflect traditional sex role stereotypes while the patterns of household work were similar to those reported in the U.S.A. and other countries. In addition, three out of four correlations between two measures of job division traditionality and scores on a sex role attitude questionnaire developed by the author were significant.

Research in the U.S.A. over the last few decades has presented a picture of the American nuclear family as dominated by traditional sex role stereotypes in its division of labour (Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Lopata, 1971). Recent research suggests this traditional pattern is changing only slightly. For example Stafford, Backman, and Dibona (1977) showed that although young men share the dishes and laundry more than their fathers did, couples of the present generation, whether cohabiting or married, divide the household along traditional lines with the women bearing the brunt of the labour.

Research in the U.S.A. (Robinson, 1977; Robinson, Yerby, Fieweger, and Somerick, 1977) and in a range of other countries (Szalai, 1972) has demonstrated that working wives, although spending considerably less time on household work than full-time housewives, tend to retain their housewife role with consequent drastic increases in their total working hours. Their husbands however, do no more household work than husbands of full-time housewives. ('Household work' is defined as including both

housework and child care. The term 'housework' as used in this report is not confined to inside work but includes care of the grounds and all home maintenance tasks.)

How does job division in the New Zealand family compare with overseas patterns? There is some rather scanty evidence consistent with the proposal that New Zealand job sharing patterns are similar to other Western industrialized countries (Brown 1970; Ritchie and Ritchie, 1970). However this research does not provide information concerning how much time men and women spend on household work. Illuminating comparisons with overseas data are therefore not possible.

The main purpose of the present research was to obtain basic data on the hours that full-time housewives, working wives, and their spouses, spend on household work in a sample of New Zealand nuclear families. Second, it was hoped to learn something of the traditionality of the division of labour of one and two income families. Third, it was planned to measure and compare husbands' and wives' perceptions of responsibility for household tasks, and compare these percep-

tions with actual performance of household work. The fourth aim was to examine the unresearched area of the relationship between attitudes to sex roles and the traditionality of the perceived, and actual, division of labour. A Sex Role Attitude Questionnaire developed by Thomas (1975) and heavily revised by Fletcher (1977) was adapted for this purpose.

The last major objective of this study was to assess via multiple regression analysis the impact that all of the variables mentioned so far, plus variables such as the size and age of the family, have on the time spent on household work by husbands and wives.

Method

Sample

The sample originally comprised 30 working wives, 30 full-time housewives, and their husbands. The definition of full-time employment was the same as that used in the 1976 census — more than 20 hours a week. There was a 100 percent return rate of time diaries but some were discarded because they were incorrectly filled out, while various factors such as sickness in the family rendered some time diaries atypical and therefore not usable. The final sample consisted of 24 full-time housewives, 25 working wives, and their husbands.

Because of the relatively low numbers in the sample it was decided to impose various restrictions on the sample to ensure reasonable homogeneity. These were that the husband earn between \$5,000 and \$15,000 per annum, that the respondents be European, that the family have between one and five children, that the parents be no older than 45, and that the housewives in outside employment receive no paid household help. The sample actually obtained could be described as a middle-class sample. The average income was between \$8,000.00 and \$9,000.00 per annum. The average age of the men was 34.8 years while the average age of the women was 31.5 years. To complete the picture of the typical New Zealand nuclear family 41 out of the 50 families had either two or three children.

Two methods were used to collect the sample. Twenty-two of the married couples were contacted using a snowball method. Approximately half this number were friends or neighbours of the original contacts who were mostly known to the author through having attended university. The remainder of the sample (28 couples) were contacted by house to house door-knocking in two suburban areas in Hamilton, one in Hamilton East and one in Hamilton West. These areas were specifically chosen to provide a sample inside the sample specifications; i.e. non-state housing areas comprising medium price housing largely occupied by young families. The respondents selected in these two ways were spread evenly across the working wife and the full-time housewife groups.

Instruments

The Time Diary

The time diary format consisted of fifty-six pre-

determined categories typed onto three pages, including one 'other' category (see Table 4). The list of tasks was made up by examining job categories used in relevant research, helped by consultation with friends and neighbours. Each time diary had seven copies of this list, one for each day, stapled into a booklet. On the right hand side of each page were seven columns. The first four were headed up 0 - 2 mins, 3 - 5 mins, 6 - 10 mins, and 11 - 15 mins. The mid-points for each time range were used as the time measures for adding up each respondent's total times. The respondents were required to place a tick in the appropriate time if they had spent less than 15 mins in that task during the day. The other three columns were headed up 15 mins - 1 hr, 1 - 2 hrs, and 2 hrs plus. The respondents were required to specify the time they spent on each activity if the task took longer than 15 mins. When two tasks were being carried out at the same time this was indicated by the use of brackets. Full instructions were stapled to the front of each time diary booklet, with instructions to ring the interviewer if any problems were encountered.

The Sex Role Attitude Questionnaire

The 12 item Sex Role Attitude Questionnaire (Fletcher, 1977) was slightly modified to make it more suitable for a non-student sample. Items 9 and 12 in the original questionnaire were replaced by the following items, designed to express the same ideas: "It would not be good for our society if women became less feminine and men less masculine" and "Apart from physical differences most of the differences between men and women are caused by their upbringing."

The Household Responsibility Questionnaire

The Household Responsibility Questionnaire contained the same list of tasks as listed in each day of the time diary. The respondents were required to choose between the following three categories for each household task: (1) they were personally responsible or responsible for ensuring it was completed by others (e.g. children), (2) the responsibility was shared between spouses, (3) the responsibility belonged to the other marriage partner.

The Traditionality Measures

Two measures were obtained for the degree of traditionality of the division of labour in each family. Both were based on an a-priori classification of all 56 job categories included in the time diary as male, female or neutral, according to traditional stereotypes (see Table 4).

The first measure (the Traditionality of Perceived Responsibility score) was derived from the Household Responsibility Questionnaire and was scored in the following way. Males who indicated they were responsible for a female task, or females who indicated they were responsible for a male task, were given a score of 3. A shared responsibility for a male or female task was given a score of 2 for both sexes and a neutral task if shared was given a score of 1. All other responses were given a score of zero. This system of scoring meant that if a married couple did not disagree on any of the items their scores would be identical.

The second traditionality score (the Traditionality of Performance score) was derived from the time diary. Every time a male performed a 'female' task or vice-versa on any one day, one unit was given. These were added up for the whole week and the spouses' scores added together to produce one score for each couple.

Procedure

Each married couple was interviewed together. Each respondent filled out, in order, the Sex Role Questionnaire, the Household Responsibility Questionnaire, and answered a series of questions concerning socio-economic variables and such factors as the size of the family, etc. The interviewers took care to ensure that each respondent filled out the first two questionnaires independently without discussion with their spouse. The time diary booklets were then headed up with their names and all instructions concerning the time diaries were discussed fully. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 mins.

Every married couple taking part was reminded the previous evening by telephone that the time diary was to be begun the next day. The diaries were collected from the respondents' homes between one and four days after the last day had been completed.

Results*The Time Diary*

The mean number of hours and standard deviations that husbands, full-time housewives, and working housewives spent on housework and child care activities are shown in Table 1. The figures show that wives in outside employment do considerably less housework during the week than full-time housewives but do more in the weekend. Husbands of working wives do slightly more housework than husbands of full-time housewives, but the total work figures are almost exactly the same. The standard deviations show that there is considerable variation from family to family in the hours spent on housework and child care. This is especially marked for the full-time housewives group. As expected the

wives in outside employment worked the longest total hours while full-time housewives worked the least number of hours.

The two groups differed in various important ways. For instance, the full-time housewives group, as compared to the working wives group was comprised of younger parents and had slightly larger families. More importantly, the working wives group had only 10 families with pre-school children (18 mths. - 5 yrs.), and one family with a baby (0 - 18 mths.), while the full-time housewives group had 15 families with pre-school children, and seven families with babies (five families had both a pre-school child and a baby). The working wives group also had more liberal attitudes (though non-significantly) than the full-time housewives group.

In order to determine whether these differences could account for the much less time that working wives spent on household tasks, four hierarchical regression analyses were performed with the time spent by women and men on child care and housework as the dependent variables (Cohen and Cohen, 1975). Any variable that approached or went below $p = .1$ on t -tests between the two groups was placed before the key variable of whether the wife worked. All independent variables were the same for each regression analysis and entered in the same pre-determined order.

Table 1
Mean Hours and S.D.s of Housework, Child Care and Outside Employment

	Husband of working wives	Husbands of full-time housewives	Working wives	Full-time housewives
Housework in working week	6.42 (4.68)	5.43 (3.82)	16.52 (6.48)	29.12 (9.13)
Housework in weekend	5.80 (3.06)	5.34 (3.27)	9.46 (4.07)	7.42 (3.76)
Child care in working week	2.43 (2.06)	2.85 (2.17)	4.57 (3.72)	11.38 (6.44)
Child care in weekend	3.98 (2.98)	4.48 (3.55)	4.81 (3.23)	6.17 (4.16)
Outside employment	47.70 (6.21)	48.67 (6.45)	32.77 (7.82)	— (—)
Total work in week	66.34 (10.61)	66.37 (9.09)	68.14 (8.88)	54.76 (19.22)

Note: Total work includes housework, child care and outside employment. Outside employment includes travelling time. Standard deviations of each category are in brackets below each item.

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The variables entered first (the family variables) consisted of the number of children, whether there was at least one pre-school child (dichotomous variable), and whether or not there was a baby (dichotomous variable). The second set consisted of the Sex Role Attitude scores for both husbands and wives. The variables in the third set consisted of the husband's age and his wife's age. The fourth set consisted of the key variable — does the wife work? (dichotomous variable). The fifth set comprised S.E.S. variables that varied only very slightly between the two groups, namely, the husband's income, (1 - 15 scale), his job status (1 - 6 scale), his education level and his wife's education level (1 - 6 scale). The sixth set consisted of one variable — the length of time the husband spent in outside employment. The traditionality variables, consisting of the combined Traditionality of Perceived Responsibility score of each married couple and the Traditionality of Performance score, were placed last. The main results for this regression analyses are shown in Table 2.

These figures clearly show that whether the wife works or not, regardless of all the preceding variables, significantly influences the amount of time she spends on housework

and child care, i.e. working wives do less household work than full-time housewives. Conversely the 'wife employment' variable has little influence on the time her husband spends on housework, though the increase in the multiple R for the husband's time spent on child care is of moderate proportions for this variable. Surprisingly however the associated zero-order correlation shows that husbands of working wives spend *less* time on child care. Similarly, whether or not the family has a pre-school child, which was the variable that contributed to the bulk of the .24 multiple R between the 'family composition' variables and the husband's housework time had an associated zero-order correlation in a negative direction, i.e. the presence of a pre-school child was associated with less housework on the part of the husband. All of the 'family composition' variables were positively correlated with the amount of time the wife spends on housework and child care.

Separate correlations were computed within the working wives group between the wives' length of time in outside employment and the levels of housework and child care of both spouses. None of these were significant (on two-tailed tests) though all approached significance levels. As expected the longer the housewife worked, the less housework

Table 2
Multiple R Values obtained from Hierarchical Regression Analyses of the Time Husbands and Wives spend on Housework and Child Care with Seven Sets of Independent Variables

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables			
	Husbands work		Wives work	
	Housework	Child care	Housework	Child care
Family composition	.24	.09	.15	.43*
Sex-Role attitudes	.31	.12	.20	.46
Spouses ages	.41	.18	.25	.47
Does the wife work?	.42	.25	.48**	.58*
S.E.S. indicators	.47	.48	.53	.68
Husbands employment	.47	.48	.54	.68
Traditionality measures	.55	.58	.61	.76*

Note: All multiple Rs marked with asterisks are significantly larger than the previous multiple R according to *F* tests on the increment in variance accounted for, using the variance not accounted for at that step as the error term. The *dfs* vary according to the number of previous predictor variables, and the number of predictor variables added on that step (Cohen and Cohen, 1975).

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

and child care she did but the more housework her husband did. Unexpectedly, the longer the wife worked, the less child care her husband did.

Attitudes to Sex Roles

The internal reliability of the Sex Role Questionnaire (S.R.A.) was satisfactory ($\alpha = .75$) while all the item-total correlations were adequate ($+ .26$ to $+ .49$) except for question No. 12 which was $+ .16$. The correlations between the S.R.A. and the measures of traditionality are shown in Table 3. All correlations are Pearson product moment correlations (one-tailed). As can be seen, the S.R.A. correlations that failed to reach statistically significant levels were those between the husband's S.R.A. scores and the Traditionality of Perceived Responsibility scores. All correlations were however in the hypothesised direction.

The Traditionality of the Division of Labour

The critical correlations for the two traditionality measures are also shown in Table 3. The correlation between the two measures of $+ .53$ is satisfactorily high, especially when it is appreciated that somewhat different methods of scoring were used to derive the two scores, and indicates that both traditionality measures are tapping a similar dimension.

The mean disagreement rate between the husbands and wives on the Housework Responsibility Questionnaire concerning who was responsible for each task ran at 32.07 percent of the number of items for the working wives group and 25.64 percent for the full-time housewives group. This difference was not significant by *t* test. Husbands tended to obtain higher scores on the Traditionality of Perceived Responsibility measure than their wives. There was also a tendency for the full-time housewives to score higher on this measure than the working wives. The mean scores for each group were: working wives = 32.40, husbands of working wives = 38.80, full-time housewives = 37.56, and husbands of full-time housewives = 38.92. A $2 \times 25 \times 2$ (groups \times couples \times sex, with couples as a random factor nested under groups) ANOVA was carried out. This showed that the effects due to sex were significant, $F(1,48) = 4.77, p < .05$, while the effects of group membership and the group \times sex interaction were not significant.

To attain a more detailed and illuminating comparison between the division of labour of the two groups (working wives vs full-time housewives) and to check the accuracy of the apriori classification of household tasks as stereotypically male, female or

Table 3
Correlation Coefficients between the Sex Role Attitude Scores and the Traditionality Measures

	Husbands trad. respons.	Wives trad. respons.	Combined trad. respons.	Trad. perf.	Husbands S.R.A.	Wives S.R.A.
Husbands trad. respons.		$+ .53^{***}$	$+ .84^{***}$	$+ .40^{***}$	$-.09$	$-.27^*$
Wives trad. respons.			$+ .90^{***}$	$+ .52^{***}$	$-.16$	$-.33^*$
Combined trad. respons.				$+ .53^{***}$	$-.14$	$-.35^{**}$
Trad. perf.					$-.28^*$	$-.24^*$
Husbands S.R.A.						$+ .46^{***}$

Note: The higher the traditionality measures scores, the less traditional the household division of labour. The higher the Sex Role Attitude scores the more traditional the attitude.

Trad. respons: Traditionality of Perceived Responsibility.

Trad. perf: Traditionality of Performance.

S.R.A.: Sex-Role Attitude Questionnaire.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Table 4
Performance of Household Tasks Comparing Males with Females and the Working Wives Group with the Full-Time Housewives Group

Household task description	Sex classif.	Full-time housewives			Working wives		
		Percent husbands	Percent wives	Total T/Diary entries	Percent husbands	Percent wives	Total T/Diary entries
Shopping — groceries, food	F	19	81	109	25	75	109
Shopping — other	F	22	78	49	17	83	30
Shopping list	F	0	100	36	17	83	35
Putting groceries etc. away	F	18	82	87	20	80	83
Breakfast	F	36	64	211	37	63	181
Lunch	F	11	89	130	26	74	47
Dinner	F	16	84	164	25	75	168
School lunches	F	11	89	100	23	77	95
Baking	F	3	97	32	18	82	22
Bottling, preserving etc.	F	14	86	44	33	77	24
Other food preparation	F	34	66	71	41	59	61
Table setting, clearing	F	33	67	187	46	54	118
Making tea, coffee etc.	F	41	59	160	40	60	127
Washing clothes	F	5	95	142	22	78	100
Hanging clothes out/drier	F	6	94	123	23	77	88
Folding/bringing in clothes	F	10	90	116	25	75	84
Ironing	F	4	96	78	10	90	58
Washing dishes	F	32	68	220	43	57	200
Drying dishes	F	36	64	189	41	59	165
Putting clothes away	F	10	90	125	18	82	85
General cleaning	F	6	94	130	15	85	100
Vacuuming	F	5	95	85	20	80	49
Making beds	F	18	82	185	21	79	161
Tidying up	F	27	73	216	38	62	186
Heavy cleaning	F	14	86	28	30	70	24
Feeding Pets	N	15	85	28	30	70	24
Cleaning shoes	F	75	25	8	50	50	8
Decorating	N	80	20	15	50	50	2
Telephoning	F	14	86	22	33	77	15
Sewing, mending	F	14	86	22	0	100	15
Knitting	F	0	100	13	0	100	2
Milk Bottles	N	37	63	143	41	59	118
Finances	N	43	57	72	51	49	75
Household Repairs	M	82	18	17	88	12	17
Transporting	N	31	69	88	57	43	95
Mowing Lawns	M	81	19	21	86	14	22
Gardening	N	60	40	121	62	38	84
Rubbish-out, in.	N	49	51	72	51	49	57
Burning rubbish	N	68	32	19	65	35	20
Washing, cleaning car	M	67	33	15	68	32	22
Car/lawnmower maintenance	M	100	0	11	88	12	24
Car servicing-petrol	M	53	47	32	56	44	39
<i>Child Care</i>							
Grooming children	F	24	76	184	21	79	123
Putting to bed	F	33	67	187	45	55	141
Getting out of bed	F	16	84	126	35	65	136
Reading stories	N	34	66	125	29	71	69
Cuddling children	N	39	61	207	45	55	168
Helping with school work	N	31	69	82	38	62	80
Assisting in general tasks	N	36	64	140	42	58	106
Attending sick children	F	33	67	12	37	63	19
Disciplining children	N	41	59	192	39	61	141
Organising activities	F	26	74	151	31	69	39
Settling fights, arguments	N	37	63	133	39	61	68
Outings for children	N	36	64	97	49	51	63
Visits to doctor, school etc.	F	0	100	28	37	63	8

neutral, all of the ticks for every day of each respondent's time diary were added up for each task and the figures compared across sex and the two groups. The results are shown in Table 4. The overall pattern is clear; husbands of working wives tend to take a greater share of most of the household tasks. However, inspection of these results reveals that husbands of working wives take a greater share of the household work than do their counterparts married to full-time housewives, by virtue of the fact that working wives do considerably less, rather than that their husbands do considerably more. The results are also consistent, with some exceptions, with the apriori classification of household tasks as male, female, or neutral.

Discussion

The results obtained in this study regarding the time spent on household tasks generally conform to overseas data (Szalai, 1975; p.390). Comparing my results to Robinson's (1977) findings I find that New Zealand full-time housewives do rather less housework than their U.S.A. counterparts (approximately 1 hour less per day) while New Zealand working wives do almost exactly the same and New Zealand men slightly more (23 mins. per day). My finding that working wives do less housework than full-time housewives during the week but do more in the weekend mirrors overseas results, as does the finding that the division of labour is largely along traditional lines.

The rather small but mostly significant correlations between the husbands' and wives' scores on the S.R.A. Questionnaire and the traditionality measures of the division of labour gives a modicum of external validity to this attitude questionnaire. The strength of these correlations is typical of the sort that researchers find when predicting general behaviour patterns from very general attitudes (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977).

One of the interesting features that the regression equations on the amount of time men spend on child care and housework show, is the lack of influence that individual independent variables have, with only three of the zero-order correlations reaching significance levels. In contrast, eight zero-order correlations between the independent

variables and the 'wives child care' and 'housework' dependent variables reached significance levels. The regression equations clearly show that the extra burden of household work associated with the presence of young children falls principally on the wife. These results are consistent with Robinson's findings in the U.S.A. (Robinson, 1977).

One of the major generalisations obvious from the results is that it is the working wives rather than their husbands who make the greater adaptation in their patterns of household work. They do this by simply spending less time on housework and child care. Nevertheless they still do considerable amounts of housework particularly on days off, spending on average nearly five hours a day on housework in the weekend. Husbands of working wives on the other hand make a smaller adjustment although they do tend to carry out stereotypical female tasks, such as washing clothes or vacuuming, more often than their counterparts married to full-time housewives.

Finally, the results illustrate the very long hours that most married men and women work in our society. The plight of working women in terms of the long hours they work has been well documented in overseas research, and commented on extensively in the media. The results from this research suggests that in New Zealand at least, husbands share that plight.

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