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Division of Household Labor: Changes Over the Course
of the Marital Relationship

Christopher W. Matteson

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

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ABSTRACT

Division of Household Labor: Changes Over The Course

Of the Marital Relationship

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Previous research has established the influence of the division of household labor between spouses on marital satisfaction, as well as the mental health of each spouse. Less is known about how the division of labor changes during the course of marriage. The family development perspective suggests that division of labor will change in response to different stages and circumstances, while the homeostasis perspective suggests that the division of labor will remain stable throughout the life course. This study used data from a 35 year longitudinal study of married women to examine changes of household division of labor over the life course.

Participants in this study were wives of medical trainees at an East Coast medical school. Data collection at Time-1 included 175 wives in 1969-1970. The wives were also contacted in 1980 (Time-2), 1990 (Time-3), and 2005 (Time-4). All the participants were white. The average age of the women at Time-1 was 25.5 years.

Participation in household labor was measured using five questions reflecting how much the husband helped in traditionally female stereotyped tasks. The five tasks were: does the family wash, sets table for dinner, clears table after meals, washes the dishes, and prepares meals. Other variables were included to help explain the change in husband participation in household labor over the course of the marriage, including number of children, the number of hours worked by the wife, and the wife's level of education.

Multi-level growth curve modeling was used to examine stability and change in husband participation in household tasks over time. The fixed effects in the baseline model showed a significant positive linear slope indicating more husband participation over time. The random effect for time was also significant, suggesting variability in slopes across the sample. Results from the quadratic effect for time indicated a downward linear slope, attenuated by a positive quadratic slope. Thus, the results indicate that husbands participate less in household tasks early in marriage, but their level of participation increases in midlife. No predictor variables accounted for significant variability in the initial value or rate of change in the husband's participation in household tasks.

Keywords: division of household labor, family life course

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This project was by far the most difficult task I've accomplished in my life. Not only was the task difficult, but it was coupled with some of the most trying years of my life. I am forever grateful for those who were able to see me going under and offered a lifeline of hope as opposed to filling my pockets with stones. I thank Robert Stahmann, Leslie Feinauer, and Claire Dewitt for being those people. Additionally, I will be forever grateful for the constant words of encouragement from Eric Vernon and Martin Openshaw, they are giants in my eyes. I look up to them as models of everything I hope to be one day.

I wish I could thank my extended family and all of my friends personally. There are so many of you who have been watching this ongoing process with your fingers crossed, and I've felt so comforted by your encouragement and prayers. Thanks.

I would like to dedicate this work to my mother, Linda Matteson, who I miss with all my heart. Additionally, I want to let my dad, William Matteson, and Beth Matteson know how much I love them and thank them for being there and just listening when I needed to vent and talk.

Finally, I want to let my wife, Rachel, know how much I love her. You've been so patient and I hope that someday I can make it up to you. I'm glad that I have someone so strong

and so full of faith by my side, I don't know how I've been so blessed to have such a wonderful wife and amazing mother to our children. Along with Rachel, I want my children; Abigail, Greta, Henry, and any future ones that may arrive in our family know how much their smiles, hugs and kisses have made life absolute bliss. I love you all with all my heart.

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Division of Household Labor:

Changes over the Course of the Marital Relationship

Researchers have found that the division of household labor in a relationship can have a significant influence on marital satisfaction (Stevens, Kiger, & Mannon, 2005; Wilkie, Ferree, & Ratcliff, 1998). For example, Sutor (1991) found that satisfaction with the division of labor was predictive of both men's and women's level of marital quality. Ward (1993) addressed the relationship between household division of labor and marital quality using data from the National Survey of Families and Household. Results indicated that perceived fairness of household labor, but not the number of actual reported hour of work, was related to marital quality among the wives, but not the husbands.

Other studies have found similar results. Stevens, Kiger, and Riley (2001) examined data from 156 dual-career couples and found that satisfaction with the division of labor was significantly associated with marital quality for both wives and husbands. Finally, Grote and Clarke (2001) performed a longitudinal analysis of the effect of perceived unfairness of the division of labor on subsequent marital distress. They found that perceived unfairness predicted Time-2 marital distress even when controlling for Time-1 marital distress.

In addition, division of household labor has been associated with the mental health of spouses, especially among wives (Glass & Fujimoto, 1994; Piña & Bengston, 1993). For example, in a four-year longitudinal sample of men and women between the ages of 18 and 65, Bird (1999) found that the amount of time spent on housework and proportion of housework done were both positively associated with psychological distress. This was especially true among women and those that were younger. Piña and Bengston (1993) reported similar findings. Looking at married women who completed the 1988 wave of the University of Southern

California's Longitudinal Study of Generations, they found that wives had lower depression scores when they were satisfied with the help and support they received from their spouse. They also found that when a wife felt that her husband was demanding too much help and support from her, she was more likely to have higher depression scores.

Similarly, Glass and Fujimoto (1994) used the 1987 wave of the National Survey of Households and Families to examine how both paid and unpaid work had an effect on depression. For both husbands and wives, the amount of hours spent on household unpaid labor increased depressive symptoms significantly. In addition, among the wives, depression was associated with perceived equity of household labor.

Recognizing the influence of household division of labor on marital quality and spouses' mental health, it is important to examine changes in how household labor is distributed. One way of looking at change in division of household labor is how the distribution of household labor between partners has changed during the past several decades. Over the past few decades, researchers have seen a decrease in the amount of time that women spend performing household tasks, while their male counterparts' time has increased only slightly (Brines, 1993; Coltrane, 2000; Robinson & Godbey, 1997). Although the evidence shows that husbands' level of participation in household tasks has increased, women still perform a disproportionate amount of household tasks. For example, Robinson and Godbey (1997) reported that in 1965 women were putting in 24 hours per week on housework, but that figure dropped to 16 hours by 1985. During that same stretch of time, though, the contribution from husbands in routine housework only jumped from 2 hours per week up to 4. While it is not as large an increase as wives report they would like to see, the same study indicates that men, especially those under 30 years of age, reported that they enjoy doing the routine tasks around the home like cooking and cleaning.

Another way to examine change in household labor is in terms of developmental change. Does the division of labor become more equitable over the life course? Few studies have examined changes in the division of household labor from a life course perspective. The studies that have examined change in household division of labor over time have typically focused on a specific event, such as the transition to parenthood (MacDermid, Huston, & McHale, 1990; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997) and the transition to retirement (Myers & Booth, 1996; Szinovacz, 2000). Those few studies that have examined changes in division of labor over the life course have relied on cross-sectional data that based their findings on comparisons between age groups (Rexroat & Shehan, 1987; Ward, 1993). These studies, however, are at significant risk for cohort effects (Alwin, Campbell, Binstock, & George, 2001), suggesting that differences between age groups may represent unique characteristics of a particular group, rather than developmental changes. To date, little analysis of long-term longitudinal studies has been conducted to examine changes and continuity of household division of labor over the life course. This study used data from a 35 year longitudinal study of married women to examine changes of household division of labor over the life course.

Review of Literature

Patterns of Change and Stability

Two theoretical perspectives seek to understand couples' relationships over the life-course through differing lenses. Scholars approaching from a developmental perspective seek to understand changes that correspond with stages of family development (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999; Heyman & Brothers, 1992; Lawrence, Eldridge, & Christensen, 1998; Nichols, 1996; Nichols & Pace-Nichols, 1993). These scholars theorize that there are distinct developmental stages which a couple's relationship will pass through. Couples who have just entered into

marriage will face far different concerns than a couple ready to enter the retirement phase of their lives. At each of these stages couples have different developmental tasks that relate to commitment, caring, communication, conflict/compromise, and contract (Miller, Yorgason, Sandberg, & White, 2003; Nichols & Pace-Nichols, 1993).

According to the family development perspective (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999; Heyman & Brothers, 1992), the division of household labor performed by husband and wife will change over the family life cycle as the demands of family life and outside responsibilities require more or less time from each spouse. This would be seen as perhaps a decrease in the husband's participation in household tasks as he spends more time away from home building a career earlier in life, but at retirement, when there are less demands on him outside the home, he increases participation in routine home chores.

Family systems theory offers an opposing theoretical perspective. The theoretical concept of *homeostasis* from family systems theory suggests that a relationship will remain fairly consistent over time in a state of balance and equilibrium and resist change (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2004) In contrast to the changing tasks and conflicts and spousal adaptation in response found in the change model, the concept of homeostasis suggests that couples establish rules of interacting, routines, and patterns of behavior early in their relationship. Miller (2000) stated that once these patterns of behavior have become established, they remain generally stable throughout the course of the relationship.

Division of Labor and Family Transitions

Research on developmental change in the household division of labor has generally focused on specific family transitions. The two transitions that have received the most attention are the transition to parenthood and the transition to retirement.

Parenthood. Research has generally found that the transition to parenthood is associated with a shift of household responsibilities to wives. Using data from the first two waves of the National Survey of Families and Households (1987-1988 and 1992-1994), Sanchez and Thomson (1997) studied whether or not parenthood created greater gender differentiation in spouses' division of household chores. Of the eligible respondents in both waves ($n = 337$ couples), 62.3% of the sample gave birth to at least one child between waves, and 36.8% percent had two or more babies. The study revealed that the transition to parenthood substantially shifted more household responsibilities to the wives. While a husband's housework remained fairly unaltered after birth, the wives' total housework increased from 60% to two-thirds of all family work hours. If the family size increased to two or more children, the wives' total housework increased to 70%.

Macdermid, et al. (1990) found similar results. They followed 98 couples over the first three years of marriage to study shifts in household labor with the arrival of children. Of the total number of couples, 29 couples had children by the beginning of the second year, 23 from the second to the third year, and 46 were still without children by the end of the third year. They found that, concerning the division of household labor, women were affected more by having children than their husbands. Their participation in day-to-day routine tasks increased while their spouse's contributions stayed constant.

Retirement. A number of studies have focused on the effect of retirement on the division of household labor. (Myers & Booth, 1996; Piña & Bengston, 1993; Ward, 1993). Two studies (Szinovacz & Hapster 1994; Szinovacz 2000) used data from the NSFH to study the changes in household division of labor that occur during the transition to retirement. The first study used cross-sectional data from the first wave of data collection in 1988. Researchers found that retirement brings about an increased participation with household chores by both husbands and wives. When a spouse retires, not only do they increase the work they do on gender-stereotyped chores, but they will also perform more work in their partner's sphere of responsibility. The second study expanded on the previous study by using two waves of NSFH data (1987-1988 and 1992-1994). The researchers used a subsample of continuously married couples who responded to both waves (n = 608 couples). Each person was aged between 50 and 70-years-old in the first wave, and at least one spouse was working 10 hours a week or more. The findings were very similar to the previous cross-sectional study. As a spouse retired, they engaged more in household tasks within their own domain and even in the domain of their spouse.

Cross Sectional Life Course Studies

Two studies have examined the patterns of division of household labor over the life course using cross-sectional data. Rexroat & Shehan (1987) used data from 1,618 couples from the ninth wave of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics to examine the total number of hours each spouse spent doing household labor at different points of the family life cycle, as well as differences between the amount of hours that they each spent. They found that both husbands and wives experienced a dramatic increase in household labor when they became parents, and their involvement in household labor gradually decreased as their children became older and

eventually left home. In terms of equity, the greatest amount of equity occurred when the couples were first married and after their children left home. The greatest period of inequity was when they had young children because the amount of household labor for men decreased during this period.

Another cross-sectional study found similar results. Suitor (1991) examined the perceptions of satisfaction with the division of household labor and found a curvilinear pattern among women's perceptions over the life course. While 61.3% of women reported being satisfied with the division of labor before they had children, the percentage dropped to 48.7% when they had preschool children. The percentage increased when the children started school and became adolescents. In the final family life cycle stage in the study, postparental, 67.6% of the women were satisfied with the division of labor. Among the men, there was no life cycle change in perceptions of satisfaction. At all points of the family life cycle, about 78% of them reported being satisfied.

Long-Term Longitudinal Studies

Although these cross-sectional studies provide important information about changes in division of labor over the life course, they are at significant risk for cohort effects (Alwin, et al., 2001), meaning that differences between age groups may represent unique characteristics of a particular group, rather than developmental differences. This is especially a potential issue when studying household division of labor because younger cohorts have grown up with very different gender role ideologies than older cohorts who were married during the middle of the Twentieth Century (Piña & Bengston, 1993; Robinson & Godbey, 1997). Longitudinal research designs are necessary, therefore, to control for cohort effects and more accurately evaluate changes in household division of labor over time.

Only one longitudinal study was located that examined the course of division of labor over a significant period of the life course. Artis and Pavalko (2003) used the National Longitudinal Surveys of Mature Women from 1974 and 1987 waves and the NLS of Young Women from 1975 and 1988 waves, (a 13 year period), to investigate changes in the percentage of women who reported full responsibility for household tasks. Both surveys included 6,592 women across five different cohorts. The oldest cohort was born between 1922 and 1926 and the participants were in their early 50s at the time of the first wave. The youngest cohort group were in their late 20's in 1975 (the time of the first wave of data collection), having been born between the years 1948 and 1952. Using these panel data, they found that the percentage of household tasks for which women were fully responsible decreased from 57.75% to 47.72% over the 13 year period of the study. Specifically, the percentage of women who reported being fully responsible for washing clothes decreased from 78.94% to 65.61%. For cooking, the decrease was from 73.59% to 62.12%; for doing dishes, the decrease was from 59.17% to 46.35%; for grocery shopping the decrease was from 65.57% to 57.04%; and for cleaning house the decrease was from 59.74% to 49.02%. The only task for which women reported rarely being fully responsible was yard and home maintenance, with 10.08% of them being fully responsible at Time-1 and 8.78% at Time-2. Thus, the general conclusion of the study was that there was an increase in gender equity over time.

While the Artis and Pavalko (2003) study collected data from two waves over a 13 year period, the present study was able to get a more comprehensive picture of the division of household labor over the life course by using data collected from four waves over a 35 year period. Having an additional two waves of data allows for the use of growth curve analysis to assess the trajectory of patterns of division of labor. Moreover, having data from early adulthood

to later adulthood allows a more complete examination of stability and change in the division of labor over the life course.

In one other study, Cunningham (2007) reported on a study that followed a large sample from the Intergenerational Panel Study of Parents and Children over a 31-year period, from 1962 to 1993. He reported on the longitudinal effect of women's employment on household division of labor, but, unfortunately, he never reported on the overall course of division of labor.

Hence, there is a need for additional longitudinal research that examines changes and stability of the household division of labor over the life course. The only longitudinal study (Artis & Pavalko, 2003) that has addressed this issue reported on data that spanned the 1970's and 1980's, with the second wave of data having been collected in 1987 and 1988. Moreover, the study only covered a span of 13 years. Thus, there is a need for a more contemporary longitudinal study of trajectories of the division of labor over a longer period of time.

This study sought to test two competing hypotheses. Examining division of labor from a family development perspective suggests that patterns of division of household labor will fluctuate as families pass through different stages of the family life cycle. On the other hand, the concept of homeostasis from family systems theory suggests that the division of labor will stay constant over the course of the relationship.

Method

A longitudinal study of marital relationships studied wives of medical trainees at an East Coast medical school beginning during the 1969-1970 academic year. At Time-1, 175 (76%) wives participated out of the 231 that were eligible. After a period of 10 years (1979-1980) from the first interview and questionnaire, the wives were re-contacted via information that was provided by the alumni office. In addition to the 175 participants from Time-1, 12 additional

wives agreed to participate for a total of 187 (81% of the 231) wives in the sample. At Time-3 (1989-1990), the same cohort of 187 wives was again contacted. Time-4 data were collected 15 years later (2005-2006). A total of 86 (64%) of the 137 women responded when contacted during this wave of data collection.

Procedure

During the first wave of the study, the wives participating were interviewed face-to-face by researchers on the university campus. Following the interview, they received a questionnaire to complete at home and return when convenient. For the subsequent waves at Time-2, Time-3, and Time-4, the women were contacted through the mail and were told the purpose of the study and asked if they would be interested in continuing to participate. Each participant was then asked to complete and return a questionnaire through the mail. Additionally, qualitative interviews were conducted over the telephone and tape-recorded. At every wave of the data collecting process, contact was made initially through the postal service, and then followed up by additional telephone calls for those who were not prompt in their responses. No financial compensation was offered to any of the wives. The analysis for this current study comes only from the data gathered from the questionnaires

Participants

The average age of the wives at Time-1 was 25.5 years ($SD = 4.0$, range 20-55). Fifty-seven percent of the participants in the sample had been married for 3 years or less, while those married longer fell within the range of 4 to 28 years, the mode being 4 years. All participants of the study were white. Many of the wives had a few years of college education. The majority of the families were still without children ($SD = 1.6$, range 0 – 6) during the first wave of data collection (see Table A1).

For Time-2, 26 (14%) participants were either not able to be contacted or refused participation in the process. One hundred thirty-one (86%) of the participating wives in Time-2 were married to their spouse from Time-1, 27 (18%) were divorced, and 3 (2%) were widowed. By Time-2, most of the wives had completed 4 years of college or 16 years total of education (SD=1.9, range 12-24 years of schooling). The average wife reported having 2 children (SD = 1.0, range 0-6). Nearly two thirds of the wives did not work outside of the home at Time-2, and those that did worked an average of 32 hours per week (SD = 13.2, range 9-60 hours).

Thirty-nine (21%) of the participants from the original sample were unable to be reached or refused for Time-3. Ninety-eight (69%) of the participating spouses remained with their spouse from Time1, 44 (31%) were divorced, and 6 (4%) were widowed. The average number of children did not change from Time-2 to Time-3. At this wave, a little more than half of the wives were reporting working outside of the home, averaging around 30 hours per week.

At Time-4, 86 (64%) of the original participants responded to the study. Of the 86 wives, 67 (79%) remained married to their spouse from Time-1. The average age of the participants was 61-years-old (S.D. = 3.1, range 56-70), and they had an average of 2 grandchildren. Roughly-two thirds of the women reported they were no longer working outside of the home, and those who did continue to work reported an average of 20 hours spent at their jobs (see Table A1).

Measures

The division of household labor was measured by having the wives rate their husband's involvement in various household tasks. The wives in the study were given a list of household tasks and were asked to "check the appropriate column next to each activity in terms of how often your husband does these activities". Five measures were chosen from a total of 44 items

(see Appendix B). The tasks that were chosen were based on ones that Atkinson and Houston (1984) recognized as traditionally feminine. The five tasks were: does the family wash, sets table for dinner, clears table after meals, washes the dishes, and prepares meals. These items were measured on a scale of one (husband never does it) to four (husband always does it). Thus, higher scores reflect higher levels of husbands' participations in the tasks. The scores were added together and then divided by five (the number of items) to create an average across all items for each person, with scores ranging from one to four.

To help explain the change in the division of labor over the marriage, the analysis included predictor measures. Taken from standard demographic information from the questionnaire, predictor variables were created from the level of education of the wife, the number of children (measured from Time-3 when the childbearing years were completed), and the number of hours the wife worked.

Analysis

Using the SPSS, growth curve analysis was used to explore how the division of labor between spouses changed over the course of the relationship. Each participant in the sample could have change patterns that were distinct over time because growth curve analysis contains an intra-individual level of analysis (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). A stacked dataset was used in these analyses that included data points for all participants for any wave of data collection in which they participated. Thus, the sample size for the analysis reflects the number of data points, rather the number of participants. There were a total of 748 observations for this study.

The predictor variables of wife's level of education, number of children, and wife hours worked outside the home were included in the analyses to examine their influence on the intercept and slope of husband's participation in household labor. The wife's level of education

and number of children were time invariant; consequently, they were grand mean-centered (centered around the average of the sample). The number of hours the wives worked outside of the home varied from one occasion to the next; consequently, it was person mean-centered (centered around the average of each individual at all four time points). Centering these variables helped in interpreting the results such that coefficients represented the effect for the average person (for time invariant predictors), and the person's average (for time varying predictors).

Results

First, a model with no predictors was estimated to determine the amount of variability between and within persons across time for husbands' participation in household work (see Model 1 in Table 1). Based on this first model, the average level of husband participation was 1.75 on a scale of one to four. The intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) equaled .39, which indicates that roughly 60% of the variance in the husband's involvement in household labor was due to intra-individual change over time, while roughly the other 40% was due to between-person differences.

Table 1. *Unstandardized Estimates (Standard Errors in Parenthesis) of Husband Participation in Household Labor Across 35 Years (N=187)*

<i>Fixed Effects</i>	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	1.75 (.04)	1.67 (.05)	1.67 (.04)	1.73 (.05)	1.56 (.13)
Time		.06** (.01)	.05* (.02)	-.15** (.06)	-.10 (.09)
Time ²				.08*** (.02)	.08*** (.02)
Wife Education					.04 (.04)

Wife Education*Time						-0.02 (.02)
Number of Children						-0.06 (.04)
Number of Children*Time						.00 (.02)
Wife Number of Hours Working						.01 (.00)†
Wife Number of Hours Working*Time						.00 (.00)‡
<i>Random Effects</i>						
Residual Variance	0.14	0.13	0.11	0.10		0.10
Intercept Variance	0.09	0.09	0.11	0.11		0.11
Slope Variance			0.02	0.02		0.02
<i>Model Fit</i>						
-2 LL (# of parameters)	382 (3)	380 (4)	371 (6)	362 (7)		398 (13)
AIC	386.00	384.00	379.00	370.00		406.00
BIC	393.00	391.00	394.00	385.00		420.00

† $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

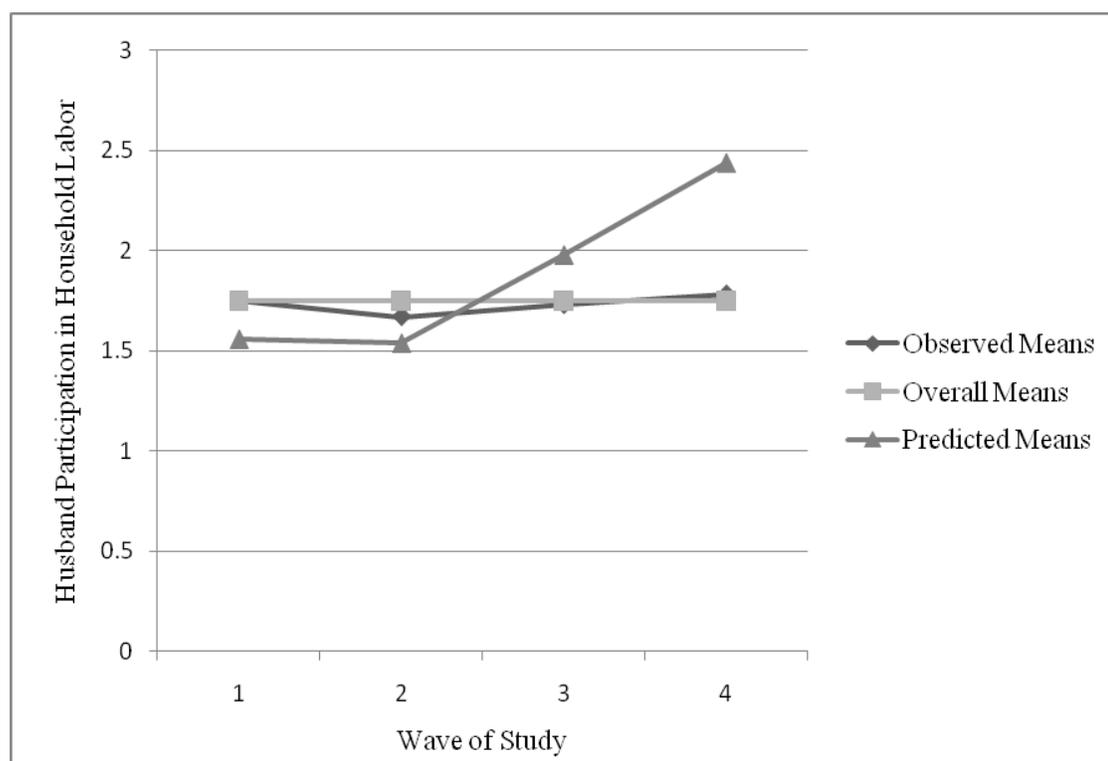
Next, a linear effect of time was entered into the model (Model 2 in Table 1). The effect of time was positive and significantly different from zero ($B = .06, p < .01$). The model included a random intercept, which was greater than zero, suggesting variability in the levels at which husbands participated in household labor at the beginning of the study. In Model 3 of Table 1, a random slope was added to the model. The random effect for time was also significant, suggesting variability in slopes across the sample. As seen in Model 4 of Table 1, a quadratic effect for time was next added to the model. Results from this model indicated a downward linear slope ($B = -.10, p > .05$), attenuated by a positive quadratic slope ($B = .08, p < .05$). A

model with a random quadratic effect was estimated (not shown), but the random effect was not different from zero.

Leading up to the final model (Model 5 in Table 1), each predictor variable was added in a stepwise fashion (see Table C1). The final model included the wife's level of education, the number of kids, and the number of hours the wife worked outside the household as predictors of both intercept and slope of husbands' household labor participation. No predictors accounted for significant variability in the outcome measure except the quadratic effect for time. The number of hours the wife worked outside the home did have a positive association with the husband household labor participation, although this effect was marginal ($B = .01, p = .10$).

Figure 1

Plot of Observed, Overall, and Predicted Means



The trajectory of husband's household labor participation is shown in Figure 1 with the overall mean, the observed mean, and the predicted mean. The overall mean depicts the average

across all years and portrays a flat line, suggesting no change over time. This number reflects the level of husband participation in household labor that would likely have been found had this study been cross-sectional, and fits with the established literature that men are involved at low levels (Brines, 1993; Robinson & Godbey, 1997). The observed means represent the average on the scale at each wave without considering predictors or control variables. This line provides an important view of how the outcome changes over time without regard to important influential variables such as if the wife is working, how many children are in the home, or the wife's level of education. The predicted mean represents the quadratic trend across time of husbands' household labor participation given the predictors and covariates, and indicates a slight initial decrease but then an increase in the later years. This line most accurately depicts change in the current sample given all the variables in the model, and fits with the life course theory of developmental change.

In addition to fixed effects in these models, random effects and relative model fit indices were also examined. First, in models one through five, the residual variance in each model remained essentially unchanged. Likewise, the random intercept and random slope coefficients did not substantively change across models, suggesting that predictors did not account for much variation. Model fit indices provided further evidence of this. The -2 log likelihood, the Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC), and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) values all slightly declined (smaller numbers indicate better fit) from models one to four. However, in Model 5, when the non-significant predictors were added, model fit worsened.

Discussion

Using data from 187 wives across 35 years, the goal of the present study was to explore how the participation of the husband in household labor either changes or stays the same across

time. Two competing hypotheses were used as a guide in this study. One hypothesis stated that husband's household participation would change over time in accordance with life course factors such as having children in the home, labor force participation of both spouses, and retirement. The competing hypothesis argued that the participation of the husband in household labor would remain relatively unchanged over the life course in a state of homeostasis.

Findings generally support the developmental perspective in that husband's participation in household labor changed over the course of the study. Specifically, it declined initially but then increased in the later years. Contrary to expectations, the number of children, the number of hours the wife works out of the home, and her level of education, were not related to the initial level or change in husbands' household labor participation.

The results of this study lend support the conclusions made in Rexroat and Shehan's (1987) study. They hypothesized that the time spent in household labor would depend on their stage in the family life cycle as each of these stages represents differences in the occupational involvement of men. Their conclusions stated that when men are least involved in their jobs outside the home, they increase their share of housework. They found that spouses have more equitable work and family roles during the beginning and ending of the family life cycle. As in this study, the effects of wives' employment status and number of hours worked outside the home had no influence on the time a husband spent in household labor. This study is also consistent with the results found by Sanchez and Thomson (1997). Their study explored if at the early parenthood stage of family development there would be a greater gender differentiation in division of household chores along gender lines. They found that parenthood did solidify a division of labor along gender lines.

All of these previous studies showed a fluctuation of how household tasks are divided between spouses over the life course, supporting the family development theory of change. Had the family systems theory of homeostasis better defined the division of household labor over the life course, a stable pattern over the duration of the marital relationship would have been found.

There is always the possibility that the results of the study may be interpreted by other explanations. It is important to remember that what can be viewed as developmental changes in this study may have been confounded by changes in society. This study took place during the 1970's when the Women's Movement was in full swing. This movement played an important role on attitudes about the gender ideas concerning the division of household labor (Balswick, Balswick, Ingoldsby, & Smith, 1995; Ferree, 1990). More egalitarian roles evolved between spouses during this time as society began to question the traditional patriarchal society. Because people of this generation began to question and change ideas of gender roles and the division of household labor, it may be difficult to differentiate between family developmental changes and sweeping changes in societal ideals.

Limitations

There are limitations to the generalizability of the findings of this study. The women studied in this sample fit a very narrow demographic profile. First, all the women who participated were Caucasian and well-educated. A majority of them had attended and graduated from college. Additionally, they were married to physicians, which put them into a higher socioeconomic status than the majority of women. Moreover, because of their high level of education and high occupational status as physicians, their husbands were not representative of men living in the United States. Consequently, because of the limited demographic nature of this

sample, it is difficult to generalize the findings of this study to women and men who are representative of minority, less educated, and lower income groups.

In addition, the four waves of data were collected only from the wives. The input of the husbands could help to provide a deeper understanding into their participation in household labor. Studies have shown that both spouses tend to overestimate in self-report surveys the time they spend on activities in the home. (Coltrane, 2000; Coltrane, 1996; Marini & Shelton, 1993). While these limitations are important to recognize, it is also important to remember that the current study contributes to the current literature by offering longitudinal data on a very specific population.

Directions for Future Research

Research conducted in the future should consider ways to overcome the limitations of the current study. Drawing from a sample that is more representative of the general population, including subjects from all races, different socioeconomic backgrounds, and multiple education levels would provide results that could be better generalized. This can be accomplished using large data sets like the NSFH, which contains substantial data of the entire population of the United States. Additionally, collecting data from the both husbands and wives on their contribution to household labor provides more accurate information (Coltrane, 2000).

During the past two decades more sophisticated forms of data collection have been utilized in the research of household division of labor. Both Marini and Shelton (1993) and Robinson and Godbey (1997) have relied on time diaries as a way to better understand the amount of time each spouse spends on various household chores. Survey questions have also become more sophisticated, replacing proportionate questions by collecting estimates on the specific amount of time each spouse performs a task (Shelton & John, 1996).

Clinical Implications

The findings from this study have implications for therapists. While the study shows that husbands tend to participate more in household labor during the course of adulthood, it is important to recognize, their level of participation is still relatively small. This can lead to added stress with the wives in their daily chores and be a risk factor for depression (Bird, 1999; Glass & Fujimoto, 1994; Piña & Bengston, 1993).

A therapist's knowledge of Bird's (1999) finding of a positive association between time spent working on household chores and depression can be of great help. Additionally, therapists need to be aware of the importance of spouses', especially wives', perceptions of fairness in the division of household chores (Golding, 1990; Piña & Bengston, 1993) and their influence on marital quality and depression. An example may be a wife in the early parenting years who is overwhelmed with her responsibilities caring for young children and maintaining the household. The results of this study, as well as other studies (Rexroat & Shehan, 1987; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Sutor, 1991) suggest that husbands' household participation during the early parenting years is especially low.

Therapists can explore with spouses the patterns of division of household labor within the home by asking questions related to how much each spouse is performing, feelings of fairness of task division, the expectations of each spouse for themselves and their partner, and ideas of gender roles in order to explore if they are playing a role into the depression of a spouse. These findings also help therapists recognize that the division of household labor is something that changes over time. Therefore, there is the possibility of conflict between spouses if they fail to recognize that they are in the midst of a transition period. Therapists who ask questions about

major life transitions and the performance of everyday household tasks can help clients adjust to new transitions by renegotiating the division of labor to fit their new circumstances.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Characteristics of the Sample

Variables	Time-1		Time-2		Time-3		Time-4	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Wife's Age	25.5	4.0	35.6	4.2	45.1	4.5	61.4	3.1
Number of years married	3.0	1.2	12.0	4.4	23.0	7.0	39.0	2.8
Wife's Level of Education (years of schooling)	N/A	N/A	16.4	1.9	16.7	2.1	16.9	1.8
Number of Children	.8	1.1	2.4	1.0	2.5	1.2	2.5	1.1
Number of Hours Worked Outside the Home	39.2	9.4	32.3	13.2	30.1	16.7	28.2	19.6

Appendix B

COMPLETE LIST OF HOUSEHOLD LABOR ITEMS FROM WHICH THE SCALE
FROM THE PRESENT STUDY WAS TAKEN

HOW OFTEN DOES YOUR HUSBAND DO THESE?

Never (1); Sometimes (2); Frequently (3); Always (4)

- 1- Empties the garbage
- 2- Locks up at night
- 3- Picks up and puts clothes away
- 4- Makes the beds
- 5- Does the ironing
- 6- Does the family wash
- 7- Cleans and maintains cars
- 8- Sets table for meals
- 9- Clears table after meals
- 10- Washes the dishes
- 11- Takes the calls for dry cleaning
- 12- Repairs things around the house
- 13- Does light cleaning (sweeping, dusting)
- 14- Does heavy cleaning (was and wax floors)
- 15- Takes care of yard
- 16- Prepares meals

- 17- Answers telephone
- 18- Teaches children right from wrong and correct behavior
- 19- Entertains and plays with children
- 20- Disciplines children when necessary
- 21- Teaches children facts and skills
- 22- Helps children with school work
- 23- Sees that children go to bed on time
- 24- Cares for children when sick
- 25- Reads to children
- 26- Dresses small children and changes diapers
- 27- Gets up with children at night when necessary
- 28- Goes to PTA
- 29- Takes children to Sunday School or church
- 30- Pays the bills and keeps financial records
- 31- Earns money for the family
- 32- Selects large household equipment
- 33- Shops for furniture and furnishings
- 34- Baby-sits the children
- 35- Plans family's savings
- 36- Gives spending money to children
- 37- Shops for family's cars
- 38- Shops for family's clothes
- 39- Checks bank statements

40- Initiates lovemaking

41- Starts arguments

42- Complains about work

43- Misunderstands wife

44- Initiates conversation or discussion

Appendix C

Table 1

Unstandardized Estimates (Standard Errors in Parenthesis) of Predictors of Husband Participation in Household Labor Across 35 Years (N=187), Added in a Stepwise Fashion.

<i>Fixed Effects</i>	Model 4.1	Model 4.2	Model 4.3
Intercept	1.73 (.05)	1.76 (.05)	1.67 (.04)
Time	-.16* (.07)	-.15** (.01)	.05** (.02)
Time ²	.08*** (.02)	.08 (.02)	.08 (.02)
Wife Education	.03 (.04)	.03 (.04)	.03 (.04)
Wife Education*Time	.01 (.02)	-.01 (.02)	-.01 (.02)
Number of Children		-.06 (.04)	-.05 (.04)
Number of Children*Time		-.00 (.02)	-.00 (.02)
Wife Number of Hours Working			.00 (.00)
Wife Number of Hours Working*Time			-.00 (.00)
<i>Random Effects</i>			
Residual Variance	0.07	0.07	0.07
Intercept Variance	0.16	0.15	0.15
Slope Variance	0.18	0.18	0.18
<i>Model Fit</i>			
-2 LL (# of parameters)	364 (12)	372 (14)	390 (16)
AIC	378	386	404
BIC	405	412	430

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Note: These models could be inserted into Table 1 after Model 4, before Model 5