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Research on Household Labor: Modeling and Measuring the Social Embeddedness of Routine Family Work

This article reviews more than 200 scholarly articles and books on household labor published between 1989 and 1999. As a maturing area of study, this body of research has been concerned with understanding and documenting how housework is embedded in complex and shifting social processes relating to the well-being of families, the construction of gender, and the reproduction of society. Major theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions to the study of household labor are summarized, and suggestions for further research are offered. In summary, women have reduced and men have increased slightly their hourly contributions to housework. Although men's relative contributions have increased, women still do at least twice as much routine housework as men. Consistent predictors of sharing include both women's and men's employment, earnings, gender ideology, and life-course issues. More balanced divisions of housework are associated with women perceiving fairness, experiencing less depression, and enjoying higher marital satisfaction.

American families are facing complex and contradictory challenges as we embark on the 21st century. Although beliefs about the appropriate roles of men and women in the workplace have undergone substantial shifts in the past several decades,

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assumptions about who should perform unpaid family work have changed more slowly. And changes in domestic behavior have been slower still. Although the vast majority of both men and women now agree that family labor should be shared, few men assume equal responsibility for household tasks. On average, women perform two or three times as much housework as men, and the vast majority of men, as well as most women, rate these arrangements as fair. In part, this is because most husbands are employed more hours and earn more income than do their wives. Compared with past decades, women are doing less housework and men are doing slightly more, but the redistribution of household labor has been slower and less profound than anticipated. In this review, I suggest that these patterns can only be understood by attending to the symbolic significance of household labor in the social construction of gender and by analyzing the social, cultural, economic, and political contexts in which men and women form families, raise children, and sustain households.

As a topic worthy of serious academic study, housework came of age in the 1990s. Not only did the number of books and articles on the subject expand dramatically during that decade, but scholars from a wide range of academic disciplines turned their attention to isolating the causes and consequences of divisions of household labor for men, women, children, families, and society. Many of these studies attempted to operationalize concepts and test hypotheses emerging from the time-use research tradition (Berk & Berk, 1979;

Robinson, 1977), or from past interview and observational studies (Hochschild, 1989; Hood, 1983). The more than 200 works cited in this review do not exhaust research on the topic, but they do represent a cross-section of influential social science works in the field. Because the foundation for this research was laid in past decades, readers interested in the history and development of the field are encouraged to consult classic housework and marriage studies (Bernard, 1972; Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Oakley, 1974; Vanek, 1974), and earlier reviews (England & Farkas, 1986; Ferree, 1990; Miller & Garrison, 1982; Osmond & Thorne, 1993; Shelton & John, 1996; Szinovacz, 1987; Thompson & Walker, 1989).

The most important theme to emerge from household labor studies in the past decade is that housework is embedded in complex and shifting patterns of social relations. Although most studies focus on only a few aspects of this embeddedness, taken together, they reveal how housework cannot be understood without realizing how it is related to gender, household structure, family interaction, and the operation of both formal and informal market economies. Recent research documents how household labor both reflects and perpetuates cultural understandings of family love and personal fulfillment, as well as helping to structure race, class, and gender relations. In particular, studies from the 1990s investigate how the allocation of household labor is linked to life-course issues, marital quality, kin relations, interpersonal power, symbolic exchange, social comparison, fairness evaluation, gender ideology and display, provider role identification, and the scheduling and performance of paid labor. This review summarizes how researchers have attempted to specify and evaluate these linkages using various measurement and modeling techniques. I first discuss some reasons for studying household labor, define important terms, and suggest how gender and housework are related. Major theoretical approaches are then presented, followed by a brief discussion of methodological issues and a review of empirical findings organized into sections on major predictors, fairness evaluations, and outcome assessments.

WHY STUDY HOUSEHOLD LABOR?

Human existence depends on the routine activities that feed, clothe, shelter, and care for both children and adults. In theoretical terms, this family work—or social reproductive labor—is just as im-

portant to the maintenance of society as the productive work that occurs in the formal market economy. Recent estimates suggest that the total amount of time spent in unpaid family work is about equal to the time spent in paid labor (Robinson & Godbey, 1997). Nevertheless, family work—and especially housework—tends to be trivialized in the popular imagination, in part because it is considered “women’s work.” Recent research confirms that family work is sharply divided by gender, with women spending much more time on these tasks than do men and typically taking responsibility for monitoring and supervising the work even when they pay for domestic services or delegate tasks to others. Research also shows that women perform more of the housework when they are married and when they become parents, whereas men tend to perform less housework when they marry and assume a smaller share of the household work after their wives have children. Because new mothers tend to reduce their employment hours, and new fathers often increase theirs, findings about housework are best understood within larger economic, social, and family contexts. When time spent on both paid and unpaid work is combined, most studies find that the total number of hours contributed by husbands and wives is much more equal. Nevertheless, when women shoulder a disproportionate share of responsibility for housework, their perceptions of fairness and marital satisfaction decline, and depending on gender ideology and other mediating factors, marital conflict and women’s depression increase. For men, in contrast, divisions of household labor and perceptions of fairness are typically unrelated to personal well-being or marital satisfaction.

Because gender is a major organizing feature of household labor, research has explored how men’s and women’s task performance differs and how their experience and evaluation of housework tend to diverge. In general, women have felt obligated to perform housework, and men have assumed that domestic work is primarily the responsibility of mothers, wives, daughters, and low-paid female housekeepers. In contrast, men’s participation in housework has appeared optional, with most couples—even those sharing substantial amounts of family work—characterizing men’s contributions as “helping” their wives or partners (Coltrane 1996). Much recent research also attempts to isolate the conditions under which men and women might come to share more of the housework. Most studies show that women who

are employed longer hours, earn more money, have more education, and endorse gender equity do less housework, whereas men who are employed fewer hours, have more education, and endorse gender equity do more of the housework. A preponderance of research also shows that when husbands do more, wives are likely to evaluate the division of labor as fair, which, in turn, is associated with various measures of positive marital quality.

Because of the potential benefits of sharing family work, the rapid increase in women's labor force participation, and increasing popular endorsement of equity ideals in marriage, many observers predicted that the division of household labor would become more gender-neutral. Nevertheless, studies published in the 1970s and 1980s seemed to offer little support for this notion (Miller & Garrison, 1982; Thompson & Walker, 1989). This left researchers with a major unanswered question: "Why don't men do more?" Before analyzing what 1990s research tells us about this and other questions, I define some important terms.

WHAT IS HOUSEHOLD LABOR?

In most studies, the concept of housework or household labor is rarely defined explicitly, except for explaining how variables are measured and providing some indication of whether child care is included in its definition. As Shelton and John (1996, p. 300) note, however, a fairly consistent conceptualization has emerged in the literature: "Housework most often refers to unpaid work done to maintain family members and/or a home." Although this concept can include child minding, household management, and various kinds of emotional labor, most household labor studies have excluded these less visible or overlapping types of "work" from study (Ferree, 1990; Thompson & Walker, 1989). As discussed below, studies in the 1990s both continued and problematized this conceptualization of housework, but the lack of attention to child care and emotional labor continued to be a major shortcoming of research on housework. In addition, whereas previous studies tended to predict absolute hours of total household labor performed by women or men, many studies in the 1990s used proportional measures for married couples and considered the gender-segregation of tasks. As noted below, some studies also began to look at the contributions of children, kin, and paid help, as well

as considering nonmarried households (e.g., single parents, cohabitators, gay or lesbian couples, single persons), and refining various techniques for collecting household labor data.

According to several large-sample national surveys conducted in the United States, the five most time-consuming major household tasks include (a) meal preparation or cooking, (b) housecleaning, (c) shopping for groceries and household goods, (d) washing dishes or cleaning up after meals, and (e) laundry, including washing, ironing, and mending clothes (Blair & Lichter, 1991; Robinson & Godbey, 1997). As discussed below, these household tasks are not only the most time-consuming, but also are less optional and less able to be postponed than other household tasks such as gardening or house repairs. These seemingly never-ending tasks have been labeled "nondiscretionary," "mundane," "repetitive," "onerous," "unrelenting," and "boring" (Blair & Lichter, 1991; Starrels, 1994; Thompson & Walker, 1989). In this article, I label these activities "routine housework," or simply "housework" (see also Coltrane, 1996; DeMaris & Longmore, 1996). Although some people find pleasure in doing this work, especially the cooking, most men and women report that they do not like housework (DeVault, 1991; Robinson & Milkie, 1997, 1998). I label residual tasks such as household repairs, yard care, driving other people, or paying bills as "occasional" or "other" household labor. In general, these other tasks have been found to be more time flexible, more discretionary, and more enjoyable than everyday routine housework tasks (Coltrane, 1998; Larson, Richards, & Perry-Jenkins, 1994).

GENDER AND HOUSEHOLD LABOR

National surveys and time-diary studies show that American household members spend 2 or 3 hours on routine housework for every hour they spend on other household labor. According to the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), in 1992–1993 the average married woman did about three times as much routine housework as the average married man (32 vs. 10 hours per week), and the average married man did a little less than twice as much occasional household labor as the average married woman (10 vs. 6 hours per week). This division of labor is so influenced by gender that the average man would have to reallocate more than 60% of his family work to other chores before gender equality would

be achieved in the distribution of labor time across all domestic tasks (Blair & Lichter, 1991, p. 99).

Some research still combines all forms of household labor into one summary measure of hours worked, failing to distinguish between routine tasks and occasional tasks (Lye & Biblarz, 1993; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Shelton & John, 1993a, 1993b). In general, this approach explains only a small portion of the variance in household labor as a dependent variable and is less successful than alternate approaches in specifying how and why household labor might influence fairness evaluations or marital satisfaction. Similarly, a focus on men's absolute hours of housework has had limited success. Reviewing previous studies, Blair and Lichter (1991) concluded "the singular focus on husbands' hours worked may be inappropriate or even misleading" (p. 100).

A majority of household labor studies now recognize and measure differences between task types and construct proportional measures to compare husbands' and wives' contributions. In acknowledging the gender typing of household labor, many researchers refer to the routine housework chores of cooking, cleaning, and shopping as "female" (Presser, 1994); "female-dominated" (Blair & Lichter, 1991); "female-stereotypic" (Sanchez & Kane, 1996); "female gender-typed" (Starrels, 1994); "traditionally feminine" (Orbuch & Eyster, 1997), or just "feminine" (Antill, Goodnow, Russell, & Cotton, 1996). Conversely, less frequent tasks such as household repairs, mowing the lawn, and taking care of cars are often labeled "male," "male-dominated," "male-typed," or "masculine" (Blair & Lichter; Shelton, 1992). A few researchers also use a third category of "gender-neutral" when neither men nor women are found to perform a preponderance of the hours for a particular task (e.g., bill paying, driving).

Often researchers signal that the tasks to which they assign gendered terms are neither inherently nor absolutely gendered by, for example, putting the term in quotes: "masculine tasks" (Blair & Lichter, 1991), "'feminine' tasks" (Hall, Walker, & Acock, 1995), "traditionally 'female'" (Lennon & Rosenfeld, 1994). In applying gendered labels to these activities, researchers explicitly acknowledge that gender influences household labor allocation, although such labeling also carries a danger of perpetuating popular cultural understandings about housework as "women's work." Recent research suggests that specific

tasks can carry different meanings about gender, that these meanings are subject to change, and that there may be several gendered thresholds that men must cross to become high participators (Twiggs, McQuillan, & Ferree, 1999). In addition, some researchers use nomenclature that focuses on the content, timing, or character of the tasks themselves. For example, Baxter (1997) captured the distinction between cooking and cleaning on the one hand and yard work and auto maintenance on the other by labeling them "inside" versus "outside" domestic tasks. Starrels (1994) used the term "daily" to measure cooking and meal clean-up but noted that other "female gender-typed tasks" such as shopping for groceries and cleaning house are more likely to occur on a weekly or nondaily basis. Barnett and Shen (1997) developed a promising distinction between "high-schedule-control" and "low-schedule-control" household tasks (see also Bird & Ross, 1993; Ross & Mirowsky, 1992). In employing the terms "routine housework" and "other household labor" in this review, I call attention to the character of the tasks themselves, rather than to cultural beliefs about the suitability of one gender to perform them.

WHO DOES WHAT?

Recent studies using random samples and precise measurement techniques demonstrate that women—especially employed women—are doing less housework than they used to and that men are doing somewhat more. Based on national time-diary studies, Robinson and Godbey (1997) reported that American women's time spent on housework declined from 24 hours per week in 1965 to 16 hours in 1985, a decline of one third. During that period, employed women cut back on the time they devoted to housework and shifted many chores to the weekends, so that they were doing about one third less family work than non-employed women. At the same time, men's contributions to routine housework increased from about 2 hours per week to about 4 hours per week (Robinson & Godbey, 1997). As a consequence, men's proportionate contribution to housework doubled between 1965 and 1985, from about 15% to 33% of the total. Using a different methodology, the NSFH shows that women's housework contributions declined slightly from 1987–1988 to 1992–1993, as men's continued to increase slowly. Broadly similar results have been reported using other national data such as the National Sur-

vey of Children, the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women, and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. The rate of increase in men's absolute hours of routine housework actually exceeded the rate of decrease in women's hours, but because men were starting from such a low level, their contributions have not approached those of women. Because the average woman still does about three times the amount of routine housework as the average man does, researchers have focused on the importance of gender in the allocation of domestic work. In the last decade review, for example, Thompson and Walker (1989) dismissed virtually all other commonly advanced predictors for household labor sharing: "women's employment, time availability, resources, conscious ideology, and power do not account for why wives still do the bulk of family work" (p. 857). Similarly, Calasanti and Bailey (1991) argued that "focusing on the *persistence* of the gender difference in the division of domestic labor rather than on factors accounting for the small amount of change may be more fruitful for understanding and eradicating inequality" (p. 49).

Whether the household labor "glass" appears half empty or half full depends on how much change one expects. Recent research shows we are far from reaching gender parity in the sharing of household work, yet most Americans judge their divisions of labor to be "fair." As a result, significant attention has been turned toward understanding the role of fairness evaluations in the allocation of household labor. As noted below, women continue to feel responsible for family members' well-being and are more likely than are men to adjust their work and home schedules to accommodate others (Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Shelton, 1992; Spain & Bianchi, 1996). Married women are still expected to manage home and family (Coltrane, 1996; Ferree, 1991; Hays, 1996; Mederer, 1993), and wives spend two or three times as many hours on housework as their husbands (Demo & Acock, 1993; Hersch & Stratton, 1997; Presser, 1994). Not surprisingly, employed wives enjoy less leisure and experience more stress than their husbands do (Barnett & Shen, 1997; Hochschild, 1989; Milkie & Petola, 1999; Robinson & Godbey, 1997; Schor, 1991).

Despite continuing gender segregation in household tasks, many American households are renegotiating norms and behaviors. Among married women, 40% indicate that they want their husbands to do more housework, and men are more likely than ever to report that they enjoy

cooking and cleaning, especially if they are under 30 years of age (Robinson & Godbey, 1997). In light of such findings, and in contrast to previous pessimism about men's assumption of housework (e.g., Miller & Garrison, 1982; Thompson & Walker, 1989), researchers in the 1990s tended to voice guarded optimism about a narrowing of the gender gap in housework. Many projected that as women's opportunities in the labor market improve and as public support for gender equity increases, there will be more sharing of housework (Barnett & Shen, 1997; Brayfield, 1992; Hersch & Stratton, 1994; Pittman, Solheim, & Blanchard, 1996; Presser, 1994; Waite & Goldscheider, 1992). Because findings of greater proportionate sharing among married couples are driven more by women's time adjustments than men's, other scholars focus on how domestic labor allocation continues to perpetuate women's oppression (Hartmann, 1993; Sanchez, 1996).

Finally, household labor research in the 1990s became much more sophisticated in its theories, methods, and research questions. As noted below, recent studies show that a wide range of social, economic, and interpersonal factors combine to influence household labor and that housework performance has complex effects on marital and family relationships. Following some path-breaking studies in previous decades (e.g., Goodnow, 1988), more attention has been paid to the household tasks of children, with results generally suggesting that teenage housework is at least as gendered as that of adults. In addition, researchers have moved beyond married couples to analyze the causes and consequences of household labor performance for cohabitators, gay and lesbian couples, single parent households, single persons, retirees, kin networks, and paid domestic laborers. Researchers also have begun documenting similarities and differences in housework among race/ethnic groups and some studies have compared patterns of housework in various countries. Taken as a whole, these studies of household labor provide us with a better understanding of the embeddedness of housework in various social institutions and interpersonal processes and offer promise for predicting future trends.

THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE STUDY OF HOUSEHOLD LABOR

The typical introductory section of an empirical household labor journal article refers to three "theories" of labor allocation as (a) relative re-

sources, (b) socialization-gender role attitudes, and (c) time availability-constraints. The first "theory" suggests that a person with more income will do less housework, the second suggests that people socialized to believe in gender-segregated work will conform to those beliefs, and the third suggests that when people spend more time in paid work they will spend less time in housework. Control variables are typically added and these three discrete hypotheses are tested in an effort to specify how and why couples divide housework. In the 1990s, an increasing number of scholars published articles and books presenting more elaborate reasons for accepting, challenging, and understanding the allocation of family work. Some explored in greater detail the multifaceted underpinnings to the three common housework predictors and argued for a more complex theoretical understanding of the many psychological, interpersonal, institutional, cultural, and economic forces involved. In the following brief review, I discuss conceptual developments in household labor studies under seven general headings. The fuzzy boundaries between categories suggest that theories in this area are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, and deserve greater elaboration in the coming decade.

Gender Construction

Given the failure of neo-classical economic theories and the three common housework predictors to explain domestic divisions of labor in past decades, researchers in the 1990s increasingly turned to theories that incorporate gender in its symbolic and performance dimensions. Perhaps the most popular approach to emerge in the last decade, gender construction theories suggest that women and men perform different tasks because such practices affirm and reproduce gendered selves, thus reproducing a gendered interaction order. Drawing on symbolic interactionist, phenomenological, ethnomethodological, and feminist understandings of everyday life, the gender construction approach posits active subjects limited by situational exigencies, social structural constraints, and submerged power imbalances (Ferree, 1991; Hochschild, 1989; Hood, 1983; Komter, 1989; Pestello & Voydanoff, 1991; West & Fenstermaker, 1993). These theories are most similar to the hypothesis of socialization-gender role attitudes noted above, but they reject the assumption that people are automatically socialized into rigid gender roles or that they develop relatively fixed at-

titudes or deeply gendered personalities. Gender construction theories are variously labeled "gender theory" (Ferree, 1990, 1991; Potuchek, 1992), "doing gender" (Coltrane, 1989; West & Fenstermaker, 1993), "gender perspective" (Osmond & Thorne, 1993; Thompson, 1993); "interactionist" (Pestello & Voydanoff, 1991), "relational" (Thompson & Walker, 1989), "symbolic exchange" (Brines, 1993; Hochschild, 1989), or gender "display" (Brines 1994; Fenstermaker, 1996). Doing specific household tasks provides opportunities to demonstrate to oneself and to others that one is a competent member of a sex category with the capacity and desire to perform appropriately gendered behaviors (Berk, 1985; West & Fenstermaker, 1993). Hartmann (1993) called such theories "gender-plus" because they begin to specify how the performance of tasks is about something else besides or in addition to the housework, thus questioning assumptions of human capital or rational choice models (see below). A large number of authors during the 1990s drew on a version of gender construction theory to help explain household labor results (Blain, 1994; DeVault, 1990, 1991; Erickson, 1993; Greenstein, 1996a; Hall et al., 1995; Mederer, 1993; Perkins & DeMeis, 1997; Perry-Jenkins & Crouter, 1990; Perry-Jenkins, Seery, & Crouter, 1992; Piña & Bengtson, 1993, 1995; Risman & Johnson-Sumnerford, 1998; Sanchez & Kane, 1996; Thompson, 1991; Van Every, 1997; Zvonkovic, Greaves, Schmiede, & Hall, 1996).

Economic and Exchange Perspectives

Brines (1993, p. 303) suggested that three overlapping economic models of household labor allocation have "come to dominate the research agenda." The neoclassical economic theory of human capital investment and its "new household economics" variants suggest that men and women allocate time to household or paid work based on maximizing overall utility or efficiency (Becker, 1981). Human capital is typically measured by education, previous labor market experience, and the wages or jobs available to an employee (Bergen, 1991). The resource-bargaining perspective focuses on family power. It views the division of household labor as an outcome of negotiation between people who use valued resources to strike the best deal based on self-interest (Brines, 1993). The economic dependency model (which others might place in the institutional or socialist-feminist categories discussed below) focuses on marital ex-

changes in the context of gender and class inequalities. In this variant, women are assumed to enter into a "contract" wherein they exchange household labor in return for economic support from a main breadwinner (Brines, 1993, 1994).

In most household labor studies, these three economic-exchange approaches are lumped into a single relative resource hypothesis, though Becker's human capital theory, with its assumptions about the efficiency of labor specialization by gender, is sometimes operationalized using time availability. As others have noted (Bergen, 1991; Ferree, 1991; Peterson & Gerson, 1993), these theories are putatively gender neutral, emphasize choice, and assume that housework allocation is governed by the rules and principles of exchange relations. All three theories share an emphasis on how partners' earnings enter into the allocation of housework between husbands and wives. Beller (1993) noted that Becker's division-of-labor model does not account for individuals deriving utility directly from spending time in certain activities, rather than just from what is produced; in other words the model ignores that couples might get enjoyment out of cooking a meal together or value equity as a goal along with marginal utility. Even if they accept some of the utility maximization assumptions of neoclassical models of labor allocation, most sociologists insist that social and cultural factors be included in theoretical models along with macroeconomic opportunity structures, the family economy, and human capital characteristics (e.g., Bergen 1991; Bielby, 1993; Blumberg & Coleman, 1989). Refuting related assumptions of neoclassical choice models, Glass and Camarigg (1992) showed that occupational gender segregation does not result from women choosing jobs that afford them more opportunities to perform domestic tasks.

Although rarely citing the literature noted above, some economists in the 1990s also began to challenge simplifying assumptions of human capital and household production theories, including the ideas that tastes or preferences for housework are fixed, exogenous, or irrelevant and that social and interpersonal influences on market and nonmarket labor allocation are epiphenomenal (Barmby, 1994). For example, Juster and Stafford (1991, p. 506) noted that the human capital literature on opportunity costs of different workers ignores the preferences of household members for different activities, even though there is well-documented evidence that those preferences differ. Recent econometric studies also have called into

question the assumption that labor supply and household labor demand are separate (Nicol & Nakamura, 1994) and have suggested that when women do more housework, their wage rates are depressed (Heath, Ciscel, & Sharp, 1998; Hersch & Stratton, 1994, 1997). A small but increasing number of economists recommend that theoretical models should attempt to incorporate more sociological factors related to gender or work preferences (Kooreman & Kapteyn, 1990; Van der Lippe & Siegers, 1994).

Institutional Influences

Related to the economic and exchange theories described above are conceptual approaches that focus on the constraints imposed by the formal economy, informal markets, state services, and other institutions. Recent studies focus on job scheduling, showing that shift work and flex-time promote housework sharing, as do non-overlapping employment schedules for spouses (Manke, Crouter, & McHale, 1994; Presser, 1994). Promising new research and theorizing in this area also focus on the purchase of domestic services, including meals, child care, and house cleaning (Bergen, 1991; Cohen, 1998; Oropesa, 1993; Presser, 1994), and on working-class and immigrant women who provide these services (Baca Zinn, 1990; Glenn, 1992; Graham, 1991). Other research looks at the organization of domestic and child-care work through kinship networks and neighborhood support (e.g., Abel & Nelson, 1990; Gallagher, 1994; Gerstel & Gallagher, 1994; Padgett, 1997). Some cross-cultural research in this tradition has looked at how global economies and immigration influence divisions of labor; other studies have examined the role of the state in promoting child care and enforcing tax policies that influence the allocation of housework (Baxter, 1997; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; Mirafab, 1994; Sanchez, 1994b). Other theories in the general institutional category have provided a more comprehensive explanation for gender stratification by relying on various levels of analysis and postulating an interplay among technological, market, political, cultural, interactional, and personal factors in the distribution of labor. Such theories posit reciprocal links between the gender organization of reproduction and the gender organization of production. They also consider sexual politics, political economy, resource mobilization, social conflicts, and social movements as they relate to the changing life options of men and women (Chaf-

etz, 1990; Collins, Chafetz, Blumberg, Coltrane, & Turner, 1993; Curtis & MacCorquodale, 1990). Such integrated theories lend themselves to cross-national studies (Baxter, 1997; Chafetz & Hagan, 1996; Sanchez 1993, 1994b), but can also explain individual behavior (Blumberg & Coleman, 1989; Gerson, 1993).

Socialist-Feminist Theories

Socialist-Feminist theories were some of the first to stress the systemic importance of the sexual division of labor (e.g., Hartmann, 1981). A distinctive feature of this approach is its continued emphases on the dual systems of capitalism and patriarchy (Agger & Shelton, 1993; Wright, Shire, Hwang, Dolan, & Baxter, 1992). Other distinctive features include its political activism and its attention to historical dynamics leading to the present oppressive situation for working-class women (Baxter 1993; Calasanti & Bailey, 1991; Jackson, 1992; Kynaston, 1996). Socialist-feminism assumes that asking about "sex-role" attitudes will not reveal how the sexual division of labor serves the interests of both men and capital. This approach shares some assumptions with economic theories but denies the free-market and individual choice premises of those theories. Socialist-feminist research on housework also contains analyses of institutions, with primary emphasis on how race, class, and gender constitute overlapping but relatively autonomous hierarchies in the world system (Baca Zinn, 1990; Glenn, 1992; VanEvery, 1997).

Morality Theories

Morality theories are simultaneously the oldest and newest to be applied to housework. They can be considered foundational because they come from ancient teachings in religion and philosophy and because family social science was founded by social reformers and moral crusaders. Morality theories of housework also seem new, however, because few family scholars from the 1950s through the 1970s felt compelled to invoke moral arguments when discussing who should perform household tasks. The general category of morality theories could be subsumed under gender construction or institutional approaches but is highlighted here because of its increasing prominence in public debates. Moral arguments have become more common in the scholarly literature as academics (along with politicians and religious lead-

ers) have staked out positions on family values, divorce, same-sex marriage, domestic partner laws, abortion rights, welfare, covenant marriage, responsible fatherhood, custody, and other issues (e.g., Glenn, 1997; Popenoe, 1996; Stacey, 1996). The general debates about culture and morality are too broad to address here, but more narrow debates about family work tend to revolve around issues of whether women are uniquely qualified to perform family service and whether housework reflects caring love, oppression, or both. Conservative and religious versions suggest that most academic models of housework focus too much on individualism, conflict, and inequality and not enough on spirituality and the positive aspects of moral obligation and service to family members (Ahlander & Bahr, 1995; Bahr & Ahlander, 1996). Liberal and feminist versions suggest that power, inequality, and love are uniquely intertwined within the household economy, religion, and the general culture (Hays, 1996; Sanchez, 1996; Thompson, 1993). Recent scholarship in the philosophy of morals has begun to reconceptualize social justice as it relates to gender, citizenship, and the care of others inside and outside of families, but this work has rarely been recognized or appreciated by family science scholars (Cancian & Olicker, 1999; Okin, 1989; Tronto, 1993).

Life-Course Factors

The 1990s saw a proliferation of middle-level hypotheses about the impact on housework of age, work experiences, living arrangements, family structure, life transitions, marriage, remarriage, childbearing, teenagers, and other life-course issues. This category reflects a loose conglomeration of hypotheses rather than a unified body of research or theory. The conceptual apparatus for these various hypotheses often is left implicit, but role theory, family ecology, and various developmental and socialization theories provide a backdrop for interpreting empirical results. For many of the reasons noted above and because of normative pressures, transitions into marriage and childbearing are expected to increase women's household labor more than men's (Blair & Lichter, 1991; Cowan & Cowan, 1992; South & Spitze, 1994). Because they are assumed to be less subject to marriage norms and because they are thought to embrace egalitarian ideals, comparison groups of cohabitators and same-sex couples are expected to share more household labor than do married couples (Kurdek, 1993; VanEvery, 1993;

but see Giddings, 1998). Because of the independence and multiple role identities available to those who wait longer to marry or have children, delayed transitions to marriage and parenthood are also expected to contribute to more equal contributions from husbands and wives (Coltrane, 1990; Pittman & Blanchard, 1996). Remarriage and a more extensive work history are also theorized to decrease women's share of housework because of the socializing impacts of prior experience and weaker norms governing behavior (Demo & Acock, 1993; Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992b; Sullivan, 1997). Childless couples and single, divorced, or widowed people are also expected to do less housework because of reduced workload, although predictions for retirees are more mixed (South & Spitze, 1994; Szinovacz, 1992; Szinovacz & Harpster, 1994). Whereas having more and younger children is expected to increase the demand for housework, having fewer and older children is expected to contribute to its performance, especially if they are daughters (Waite & Goldscheider, 1992). Not only might children add to demand for and performance of housework, but parents' desires to instill family obligation in children or to teach them gender-typed skills are expected to influence family work patterns (Goodnow, Bowes, Warton, Dawes, & Taylor, 1991). Although often neglected, housing variables (tenure, dwelling size, length of residence) are also related to life stages and are expected to influence household labor demand, performance capability, normative obligations, and labor allocation. Research in the coming decade ought to include more of these demographic and life-course variables and strive to articulate theoretical relationships among overlapping hypotheses.

Psychological and Socialization Theories

Psychological or socialization theories suggest that men and women with "traditional" attitudes will share less housework, whereas men and women with "nontraditional" attitudes will share more housework. These theories assume that from childhood on, men and women are socialized to conform to predetermined "sex roles" and thereby develop gendered personalities and preferences. Some research in the 1990s continued tests of whether "androgynous" individuals (those high on "femininity" and "masculinity") shared more housework (Gunter & Gunter, 1990). More common in recent studies, however, are "gender traditionalism" scales, including questions about

the rights of women, the appropriate work and family roles of men and women, and whether children will be harmed if they spend time away from their mothers. One of the NSFH items that best predicts sharing of housework among couples simply asks "Do you believe that men and women should share housework when both are employed?" As proponents of gender construction approaches argue, theoretical interpretation of attitude findings is difficult, and scholars do not agree on the depth or stability of gender attitudes and gendered personalities. Simple "tests" of socialization versus social structural explanations for housework allocation have become less common recently because researchers have begun to focus on various mediators and consequences. Often invoking theoretical constructs such as role overload, role strain, or role conflict, more studies are investigating causal factors and mediating conditions in respondents' depression and individual well-being, as well as in couples' conflict and marital satisfaction. A final use of psychological theories about household labor comes from clinical, counseling, and social work fields. Most theories postulate that women in general, and employed women in particular, will function better and be less depressed if they can shed total responsibility for housework and child care. Therapists and researchers propose various nonthreatening ways to encourage men to pay more attention to housework and specify some of the potential beneficial impacts on marriages and on men's emotional development (Hawkins & Roberts, 1992; Mintz & Mahalik, 1996; Rasmussen, Hawkins, & Schwab, 1996). Others suggest how existing counseling models ignore issues of power and fail to hold men fully accountable for housework and family management (Braverman, 1991).

Important concepts within each of the approaches noted above offer researchers theoretical tools to explore questions about how and why housework is divided and how divisions of household labor influence individuals and families. Theories within each category are sometimes overlapping and sometimes competing, and there is significant interplay among the categories. Although it is inappropriate to assume that one can test fully the utility of one theory versus another, with the introduction of comprehensive data sets (e.g., NSFH) and new data analysis techniques, researchers are beginning to specify the conditions under which one theory better predicts measurable outcomes. As noted below, given fairly narrow research questions, precise measurement techniques, and comparable levels of

analysis, several robust predictors have begun to emerge. The task for the next decade is to specify conceptual links among common predictors and to develop more comprehensive theoretical models of household production, labor segmentation, gender differentiation, family functioning, and personal well-being.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Information about household labor in the 1990s was collected using time diaries and survey questions, but studies also used other methods such as qualitative depth interviews, direct observations, discourse analysis, historical-comparative methods, and longitudinal study designs.

Time Diaries

In time diary studies, individuals are asked to complete logs accounting for time spent on various activities, usually for a 24-hour period, with results collected via phone, mail, or in person (Harvey, 1993; Marini & Shelton, 1993; Robinson & Godbey, 1997). Important temporal variables within the time diary method include length of recording period and whether respondents are asked to report activities at the end of the day or retrospectively on the next day. Daily activity collected on the next day differs little from that collected on the same day, and weekend information often is collected up to a week later with little distortion (Robinson & Godbey, 1997). Time diaries generally are considered to generate the most accurate (and lower) estimates of time spent on specific activities, although simultaneous activities are sometimes ignored or underestimated, and if the day selected is not representative, other biases may enter (Niemi, 1993; Robinson & Godbey, 1997). Most researchers report that variations in question format produce only minor changes in results (Harvey, 1993; Shelton & John, 1996), although differences in diary layout can slightly change estimates of activity patterns over the day (Geurts & DeRee, 1993). The diary-like Experience Sampling Method, in which participants carry pagers and are signaled at random times and asked to fill out activity and subjective state reports, has also been used to verify time diary estimates (Juster & Stafford, 1991) and to study how household labor is associated with emotional well-being or distress (Larson et al., 1994; Larson & Almeida, 1999).

Survey Questions

Direct questions about time spent on household labor have been asked in many national and some regional phone, mail, and in-person interview surveys. Respondents typically are asked how much time they "usually" spend per week on specific household activities or how much time they spent "yesterday" on selected activities. Comparisons with time diary studies show that results are highly correlated but that direct-question surveys produce estimates of time spent that are often 25%–50% higher, especially for frequently performed activities (Juster & Safford, 1991; Marini & Shelton, 1993; Press & Townsley, 1998). For less frequently performed activities, survey questions may produce lower estimates, especially if the period of recall is long (Marini & Shelton, 1993; Shelton & John, 1996). Both men and women tend to overestimate their own contributions in direct-question surveys and to double-count time spent in simultaneous activities; some studies suggest that men may inflate their estimates more than women because of cognitive biases relating to salience effects and ego-enhancement (Coltrane, 1996; Kiger & Riley, 1996; Marini & Shelton, 1993; Press & Townsley, 1998). In addition, missing responses may predominate among couples in which husbands contribute little to housework, leading to overestimates of husbands' contributions in data sets such as the NSFH (Szinovacz & Harpster, 1994), and more research is needed on how and why couples who do not answer detailed questions on housework might differ from others. Proportional estimates of a spouse's time spent in household labor are approximately equal whether diaries or surveys are used (Sullivan, 1997), but while they may be both reliable and valid, proportional measures are difficult to interpret because they cannot be used for all households, do not measure how much time is spent on housework, and do not reflect whether shifts result from wives doing less or husbands doing more (Marini & Shelton, 1993).

Variation in question wording for survey items include asking how much time respondents spend in a typical week on "housework" (Brines, 1994); asking who does each of a list of tasks (Baxter, 1997; Ferree, 1991), sometimes followed by questions about how often (Robinson & Spitze, 1992); asking what percentage of each task was done by each spouse (Wright et al., 1992); and asking whether women had sole responsibility or shared responsibility for a list of tasks (Waite & Gold-

scheider, 1992). In general, researchers have moved away from asking simple proportionate questions (who does more tasks) and toward collecting hourly estimates of performance because more narrowly defined tasks produce more accurate estimates (Shelton & John, 1996). As noted above, many researchers convert hourly estimates into proportionate measures of routine housework to capture task segregation (Blair & Lichter, 1991; Coltrane & Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Demo & Acock, 1993; Glass & Fujimoto, 1994; Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994). Using hourly estimates alone can mask issues of equity, but using proportional measures alone can mask substantial differences in performance, so some researchers advocate using both (Barnett & Shen, 1997). Whereas past studies often collected information about various household members' task performance from wives only, many studies in the 1990s used estimates of self and spouse contributions to each task from both husbands and wives (typically averaged to minimize reporting biases; see Coltrane, 1996). Some recent studies also collect housework information from and about children (Antill et al., 1996; Goodnow, Bowes, Warton, Dawes, & Taylor, 1991; Manke et al., 1994; McHale, Bartko, Crouter, & Perry-Jenkins, 1990). Finally, although most housework studies have not included measures of child care, using both in the same models can help explicate their interrelations (Almeida, Maggs, & Galambos, 1993; Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992a).

Several innovations in survey design and content also emerged in the 1990s, including the use of card-sorting techniques to measure relative task performance (Coltrane, 1996; Risman & Johnson-Sumerford, 1998). Researchers devised new questionnaire instruments to measure fairness (Hawkins, Marshall, & Allen, 1998), task management (Mederer, 1993), maternal gatekeeping (Allen & Hawkins, 1999), control over housework scheduling (Barnett & Shen, 1997), personal obligation to perform tasks (Perkins & DeMeis, 1996), family social class (Wright et al., 1992), and provider role identity (Perry-Jenkins et al., 1992). Others employed survey variables not often used in household labor studies, such as non-overlapping work hours (Presser, 1994), work-place authority (Brayfield, 1992), occupational autonomy for both spouses (Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994), paid domestic labor (Oropesa, 1993), home ownership (South & Spitze, 1994), age at first birth (Coltrane & Ishii-Kuntz, 1992), and previous cohabitation (Sullivan 1997). The availability of large national

data sets such as the NSFH, with substantial information on both household labor and family functioning, allowed for the testing of various hypotheses about the entire U.S. population and specific subgroups, although problems associated with frequent reanalysis of the same data also emerged in the 1990s. Relatively recent and more sophisticated data-analytic and modeling techniques were also introduced to household labor studies during the decade: log linear modeling (Dancer & Gilbert, 1993), multinomial logistic regression (Waite & Goldscheider, 1992), hierarchical structural equation modeling—LISREL (Coltrane & Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Piña & Bengtson, 1995), hierarchical regression (Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994), maximum likelihood estimation—TOBIT (Brines, 1994), and multiple classification analysis (Robinson & Milkie, 1998).

Other Methods

Although most household labor studies in the decade collected and analyzed quantitative data, many studies used observational and less structured interview techniques to generate qualitative data, describe social processes, and construct ideal types. Perhaps best known of the studies in this category are Hochschild's *The Second Shift* (1989) and *The Time Bind* (1997) and DeVault's *Feeding the Family* (1991), both of which generated new insights and hypotheses. Other case studies and interview-based research projects illuminated how family life, gender, and household labor are intertwined and mutually produced (e.g., Coltrane, 1996; Doucet, 1995; Gager, 1998; Gerson, 1993; Hays, 1996; Potuchek, 1992; Ribbens & Edwards, 1995; Risman & Johnson-Sumerford, 1998; Wharton, 1994; Zvonkovic et al., 1996). A few studies explicitly adopted discourse analysis to understand how housework, gender, and family are constructed through narratives (Blain, 1994; DeVault, 1990; West & Fenstermaker, 1993).

A new development in household labor studies was signaled by the large number of comparative and cross-national studies that appeared during the decade. Although results were often limited, using the nation-state as a unit of analysis showed promise for developing a sociological understanding of links between household labor and other cultural, institutional, and structural factors. In general, men in virtually all countries studied increased their contributions to household labor slightly from previous decades (Juster & Stafford, 1991). Canadian studies show results broadly similar to

similar studies conducted in the United States, with Canadian men perhaps doing a little more than U.S. men (Baxter, 1997; Blain, 1994; Brayfield, 1992; Haddad, 1994; Harrell, 1995; Nakhaie, 1995; Wright et al., 1992). Studies in Australia yielded similar results to those from Canada (Antill et al., 1996; Baxter, 1997; Wright et al., 1992), and studies in England, mostly qualitative, report extremely wide diversity in results (Bonney & Reinbach, 1993; Doucet, 1995; Hakim, 1996; Sullivan, 1997; VanEvery, 1997). With some variation, studies show that Swedish men do slightly more housework than U.S. men and Norwegian men (Baxter, 1997; Calasanti & Bailey, 1991; Juster & Stafford, 1991; Kalleberg & Rosenfeld, 1990; Wright et al., 1992). Conversely, studies show that Japanese men do less than U.S. men (Juster & Stafford, 1991; Kamo, 1994; Strober & Chan, 1998). Few comparisons have been made to less developed countries, although Sanchez (1993, 1994b) found that three of five Asian countries have greater rates of sharing than is exhibited in the United States. Other researchers investigate household labor in Turkey (Bolak, 1997), the former Yugoslavia, (Massey, Hahn, & Sekulic, 1995), and Mexico (Miraftab, 1994). Although these transnational and comparative studies often set out to isolate the potential impact of state policy or taxation on domestic labor sharing, methodological problems are great, and finding significant differences in predicted directions is rare (Kalleberg & Rosenfeld, 1990).

One of the most important methodological developments of the decade was a move toward longitudinal studies. Because correlations from cross-sectional analyses can reflect spurious associations, many researchers called for more detailed longitudinal studies (Jacobs, 1993; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997). The availability of housework questions in national longitudinal data sets such as the NSFH, the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women, and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics made testing of causal pathways more possible during the 1990s. Led by developmental paradigms, both quantitative and qualitative studies looked at changes in parenting and housework over time (Almeida et al., 1993; Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Deutsch, Lussier, & Servis, 1993; Johnson & Huston, 1998; MacDermid, Huston, & McHale, 1990; Pittman et al., 1996; Sullivan, 1997; Zvonovic et al., 1996). Part method and part subject matter, the ultimate longitudinal approach—historical studies—continued to inform our understanding of household labor during the 1990s.

With the proliferation of historical studies of everyday life, historians of housework have a wealth of new material from which to draw. Historical studies of housework can inform economic models and refine estimates of productive output (Folbre & Wagman, 1993), but cultural histories carry the most potential for understanding housework in its social context. Analyses of the emergence of separate spheres and an ideology of intensive mothering are particularly enlightening (Hays, 1996; Jackson, 1992; Siegel, 1998), as are studies of how immigrants and women of color have performed domestic labor (Glenn, 1992; Palmer, 1989; Romero, 1992). Historical studies suggest that future household labor research should incorporate measures of paid domestic labor, substitution of services, and housework standards into their allocation models.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Predictors of Household Labor

In contrast to research conducted in earlier decades, 1990s studies find that men's share of housework has several consistent predictors, including women's employment patterns, ideology, and earnings, followed by men's employment hours and ideology. Other predictors of men's relative share of housework, including age, life-course issues, marital status, and children, are also found to influence the relative share of housework performed by men. The few studies that measure initiation or management of family work find that women almost invariably assume a manager role, with men occasionally serving as their helpers (Blain, 1994; Coltrane, 1996; Gunter & Gunter, 1990; Hawkins, Roberts, Christiansen, & Marshall, 1994; Mederer, 1993; West & Fenstermaker, 1993). The gender division of household labor is typically attributed to men's reluctance to assume responsibility, but some studies also discuss women's reluctance to relinquish control over family work (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Ferree, 1991; Haas, 1992; Hawkins & Roberts, 1992; Hays, 1996). Studies using measures of men's absolute time spent on all types of household labor identify fewer significant predictors and explain less variance than studies using women's hours or proportional measures of routine housework. In addition, the same predictors do not necessarily apply to all people or even to the same person at different times or under different circumstances (Gerson, 1993), leading some to promote looking at bread-

winner-homemaker families separately from dual-earner families or dividing samples according to family structure or life stage (Bonney & Reinbach, 1993; Doucet, 1995; Hakim, 1996; Perry-Jenkins et al., 1992; Sullivan, 1997).

Women's Employment. Of the time availability variables, women's employment hours have the strongest and most consistent effects on women's absolute levels of housework and men's share of housework. Robinson and Godbey (1997) report that employed women do one third less family work than nonemployed women. With few exceptions, dual-earner couples are found to share more family work than male-only breadwinner couples (DeMeis & Perkins, 1996; Fish, New, & Van Cleave, 1992; Presser, 1994; Starrells, 1994; Sullivan, 1997; but see Hossain & Roopnarine, 1993). Studies now find that women routinely spend less time on housework when they are employed longer hours, and men living with them do a greater share of the domestic work (Almeida et al., 1993; Baxter, 1993; Blair & Lichter, 1991; Brayfield, 1992; Calasanti & Bailey, 1991; Coltrane & Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Demo & Acock, 1993; Goldscheider & Waite, 1991; Greenstein, 1996a; Heath & Bourne, 1995; Kalleberg & Rosenfeld, 1990; Peterson & Gerson, 1993; Shelton, 1990; Shelton & John, 1993a; Wright et al., 1992). When women spend more time on the job, they also spend less time providing help and support to extended kin (Gerstel & Gallagher, 1994). The relationship between women's employment hours and men's housework is more varied. Some studies find that women's employment hours are related both to men's absolute hours and proportional contributions to housework (Almeida et al., 1993; Blair & Lichter, 1991), whereas others find that women's employment hours are significantly related only to men's proportionate contributions (Larson et al., 1994). When women are involved in shift-work or flex-time employment, men contribute more to housework (Silver & Goldscheider, 1994), especially if there is non-overlap between spouses' employment hours (Presser, 1994). Other aspects of women's employment also may influence household labor allocation. Some small sample studies suggest that women in professional jobs do more housework because they compensate for gender-atypical breadwinning patterns (Biernat & Wortman, 1991; Deutsch et al., 1993; Hochschild, 1989), but other studies using representative samples find that women with higher occupational prestige, or more workplace authority tend to

share more of the housework with their husbands (Brayfield, 1992; Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994; Presser, 1994; but see Brines, 1993).

Men's Employment. As for women, less paid work generally means more family work for men, but low levels of housework and greater variation among men produces some mixed results. Men's commitment to employment is a weaker and less consistent predictor of household labor than it is for women, especially when a large number of predictors are entered into multivariate models. Using national samples, researchers typically find that men who are employed fewer hours do a greater share of housework, child care, or both (Baxter, 1993; Brines, 1993; Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992a; Greenstein, 1996a; Haddad, 1994; Hersch & Stratton, 1994; Waite & Goldscheider, 1992), as do men whose employment hours do not overlap with their wives' (Presser, 1994). In contrast, some studies find no relationship between men's employment hours and their housework (Almeida et al., 1993; John & Shelton, 1997; Sullivan, 1997). Results concerning men's unemployment are also mixed, with some finding that Black and White unemployed men do more housework (Orbuch & Eyster, 1997) and others finding that unemployed Black men do less housework (Shelton & John, 1993b). Small sample studies from the 1990s continue to show that most men identify themselves as primary breadwinners and that both men and women are reluctant to accept wives as equal providers (Bergen, 1991; Biernat & Wortman, 1991; Larson et al., 1994; Perry-Jenkins & Crouter, 1992; Rubin, 1994). In some studies, accepting wives as coproviders is identified as the key factor in reallocating family work (Coltrane & Valdez, 1993; Hood, 1993; Potuchek, 1992).

Earnings. In general, wives who make more money enjoy more equal divisions of labor. Results were mixed in past studies, whereas research in the 1990s suggested that when relative earnings between husbands and wives are more equal, the relative distribution of household tasks is more balanced. Some find that when women's absolute levels of earnings go up, their absolute levels of time spent on housework go down (Beller, 1993; Brines, 1993; Hersch & Stratton, 1997; Silver & Goldscheider, 1994). Smaller absolute income differences between husbands and wives are associated with more housework sharing (Baxter, 1993), and wives' proportionate share of earnings is consistently associated with more equal divisions of

housework (Blair & Lichter, 1991; Brayfield, 1992; Calasanti & Bailey, 1991; Coltrane, 1996; Deutsch et al., 1993; Greenstein, 1996a; Harrell, 1995; Heath & Bourne, 1995; Hersch & Stratton, 1994; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Starrels, 1994; Steil & Weltman, 1991; Sullivan, 1997; Van der Lippe & Siegers, 1994).

A simple economic or power interpretation of these results does not hold across the full range of incomes. As noted above, when men are unemployed, they sometimes do less housework. For example, Brines (1994) found that dependent husbands do less housework the more they depend on their wives for income, noting that this dynamic is particularly evident among (although not limited to) married men in low-income households. At the opposite end of the income pyramid, different patterns emerge. Wealthier men do little housework, but the amount their wives do varies significantly. Women's higher occupational status and income (but not men's) is strongly associated with the purchase of domestic services (Cohen, 1998; Oropesa, 1993). Results from sample surveys using quantitative data and results from historical and ethnographic studies using qualitative data thus converge on a general finding: women's economic resources allow them to reduce their own housework contributions and "buy out" of gendered domestic obligations. Upwardly mobile and well-educated women are the most likely to purchase domestic services, whether performed in their own homes or embedded in the food and products they purchase for the family from outside the home (Oropesa, 1993). It is predominantly White, middle-class women who consume these services and products, and it is immigrant, ethnic minority, and working-class women who produce and provide them (Glenn, 1992). How women near the bottom of the earnings pyramid manage to care for their own homes and families is a topic that more survey and quantitative studies of household labor should address in the coming decade.

Education. Education often is used as a control variable in multivariate models predicting household divisions of labor. Interpretation of findings is complicated by conceptual confusion about whether years of education should be considered a measure of human capital accumulation, a relative resource, a component of social class, an indicator of ideology or attitudes, or a life-course transition experience. In general, studies suggest that women with more education do less house-

work (Bergen, 1991; Hersch & Stratton, 1994; Pittman & Blanchard, 1996; Presser, 1994; Orbuch & Eyster, 1997; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; South & Spitze, 1994), purchase more domestic services (Cohen, 1998), and have children who do less housework (Waite & Goldscheider, 1992). In contrast, men with more education generally do more housework (Bergen, 1991; Haddad, 1994; Orbuch & Eyster, 1997; Pittman & Blanchard, 1996; Presser, 1994; South & Spitze, 1994; Waite & Goldscheider, 1992).

Ideology. Studies from the 1990s show that women's egalitarian gender ideology is a consistent predictor of household labor sharing. When wives feel more strongly that both paid work and family work should be shared and when they agree more fully with statements about equality between women and men, they are more likely to share housework with husbands. Some studies also show that more egalitarian men share more housework or child care (Almeida et al., 1993; Blair & Johnson, 1992; Baxter, 1993; Calasanti & Bailey, 1991; Greenstein, 1996a, 1996b; Harrell, 1995; Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992a; Mederer & Weinstein, 1992; Orbuch & Eyster, 1997; Perry-Jenkins & Crouter, 1990; Pittman & Blanchard, 1996; Presser, 1994; Starrels, 1994; Waite & Goldscheider, 1992; Wright et al., 1992; but see Sanchez & Thomson, 1997). The fit between spouses' attitudes is also important: Spouses with similar views are likely to put those ideals in practice (i.e., more congruent egalitarians share more housework, more congruent traditionals share less) (Greenstein, 1996a; MacDermid et al., 1990). Baxter (1993) suggested that one's own attitudes impinge more directly on one's own tasks than do the attitudes of one's spouse. Starrels (1994) found that an earnings gender attitudes interaction term is the best predictor of housework sharing in multivariate models.

Age and Life-Course Issues. Because the meaning of housework varies between generations, some studies focus on cohort effects in its distribution (Barnett & Shen, 1997). In general, younger women do less housework and share more of it than do older women (Hersch & Stratton, 1994; Shelton & John, 1993a; Van der Lippe & Siegers, 1994), prompting some to call for studies of young just-marrieds (South & Spitze, 1994; Perkins & DeMeis, 1996). Others find that when ideology and other variables are entered into multivariate models, cohort effects become non-

significant (Presser, 1994). Another finding related to age is that the larger the age gap between spouses, the less the couple shares housework (Presser, 1994). Some studies find that men increase their contributions to household labor after retirement, although they do so for affiliative reasons and remain in a helper role (Piña & Bengtson, 1995; Szinovacz, 1992). Some suggest that retirement does not change the gender division of labor significantly, although some women expect it (Robinson & Spitze, 1992; Ward, 1993), and others specify how past employment, retirement, and gender interact to influence task allocation (Szinovacz & Harpster, 1994).

Marital Status. Being married means more housework for women and less for men (Gupta, 1999; Nock, 1998; Shelton, 1992). Single and cohabiting women perform less housework than do married women, but single and cohabiting men perform more housework than do married men (Nock, 1998; Perkins & DeMeis, 1996; Shelton & John, 1993a). Because single mothers perform about as much housework as do married mothers (Demo & Acock, 1993), married fathers may do about as much household work as they create (Hartmann, 1981). When single-mother and single-father households are compared, women do more housework than do men, suggesting that even without a spouse, housework is still gendered (Fassinger, 1993; Hall et al., 1995). Nevertheless, single fathers do more housework than do married fathers, and therefore the difference between men's and women's housework in single parent families is less than it is in two-parent families. The first marriage may be the most likely to produce gendered divisions of labor because remarried households share more than first married ones (Demo & Acock, 1993; Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992b; Pyke & Coltrane, 1996; Sullivan, 1997; but see Presser, 1994).

Presence of Children. Studies show that the transition to parenthood is associated with movement toward less sharing of family work between men and women (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Johnson & Huston, 1998; MacDermid et al., 1990; Shelton, 1992). Women tend to feel more obligation to perform household labor when they have children, just as they do when they get married (Perkins & DeMeis, 1996; Wharton, 1994). When couples have children, men tend to work more hours at paid jobs but do not necessarily put in more hours of housework. Women, in contrast, tend to work

fewer hours on the job and begin to put in significantly more hours of domestic work (Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Shelton, 1992). Other studies show that more preschool children are associated with more hours of household labor for both men and women (Baxter, 1994; Bergen, 1991; Presser, 1994; Van der Lippe & Seigers, 1994). Nevertheless, because women increase their hours more than men do, they end up doing a larger share of family work as the number of children increases (Greenstein, 1996a; Hersch & Stratton, 1994; Shelton & John, 1993a; Perkins & DeMeis, 1996; Presser, 1994; Shelton & John, 1993a, 1996; Van der Lippe & Seigers, 1994; but see Kamo, 1991 on the nonlinearity of effects). A few studies suggest that later transitions to parenthood produce more equal divisions of child care and housework (Coltrane, 1990; Coltrane & Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Pittman & Blanchard, 1996). As men do more child care, they may also do more housework, especially if the firstborn child is a boy (Fish et al., 1996; Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992a; Presser, 1994).

Race and Ethnicity. Household labor studies in the 1990s began to take race seriously. Most studies find that Black men do more housework than do White men, net of other predictors, but that Black women still do almost twice as much housework as do Black men (Bergen, 1991; Broman, 1991; Heath & Bourne, 1995; Hossain & Roopnarine, 1993; John & Shelton, 1997; Orbuch & Eyster, 1997; Padgett, 1997; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997). Some find that common predictor variables work somewhat differently for Blacks, in part because of more egalitarian attitudes and greater employment and earnings equality between spouses (Orbuch & Eyster, 1997). For example, employed Black women do fewer hours of housework than do other women (Silver & Goldscheider, 1994) but Black men do more hours of housework if they are employed (Shelton & John, 1993b). Some find that Black men are less likely to perceive the division of household labor as unfair to their wives as are White men (DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; John, Shelton, & Luschen, 1995). Others find unique patterns of labor allocation in Black families when extended kin are included, with Black adult children living at home contributing more than Whites (Spitze & Ward, 1995) and Black men doing more (Padgett, 1997) or less (Wilson, Tolson, Hinton, & Kiernan, 1990) when grandmothers and other kin contribute. Preliminary findings also suggest that nonresident Black

fathers contribute more than do nonresident White fathers (Wilson et al., 1990).

Findings are contradictory concerning the sharing of family work in Latino families, with some suggesting there is slightly more sharing than among White families (Mirande, 1997; Shelton & John, 1993b) and some suggesting there is less (Golding, 1990). Most studies show similar patterns of association between variables whether the couples are Latino or Anglo (Coltrane & Valdez, 1993; Golding, 1990; Herrera & del Campo, 1995; John et al., 1995), although DeMaris and Longmore (1996) found Latino men and women to be less likely to view household labor as unfair to the wife than did Anglo men and women. In a unique contribution, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1992) documented the independent effects of immigration on labor sharing in Mexican American families. Work on other ethnic minorities in North America is still rare, although Johnson (1998) found some cultural norms promoting sharing among Vietnamese and Laotians in the United States, and Brayfield (1992) found that French Canadians share more housework than do English Canadians.

Fairness Evaluations

Although women perform two thirds of the total household labor, only about one third of them rate their division of labor as unfair, prompting researchers in the 1990s to investigate what fairness evaluations mean. According to Lennon and Rosenfeld (1994), couples do not use 50% as an "equity point"—men find the division of labor to be fair when they contribute 36% of the time devoted to household tasks, whereas women find the division of labor to be fair when they contribute 66% of the total. Such findings suggest that unequal divisions of labor are accepted as normal and help explain why past studies have found little relation between actual divisions of labor and perceptions of fairness. Nevertheless, research in the 1990s begins to isolate conditions associated with labeling divisions of household labor as "fair" or "unfair." Some also call attention to measurement problems in the area of fairness evaluations, especially with an NSFH item that lacks unidimensionality and is difficult to interpret (Smith, Gager, & Morgan, 1998).

Resource theories and their derivatives predict how people make fairness evaluations about housework. Classical exchange theory suggests that women will see as fair those situations in

which they are doing the least amount of housework and unfair those in which they are doing the most (Suitor, 1991). Equity theory posits that partners will feel uncomfortable with situations in which they are either over- or under-benefitted, suggesting that both men and women will see as most fair those situations in which they share the household labor about equally (Piña & Bengtson, 1993). Challenges to these theories come from studies showing that even employed women tend to label unbalanced divisions of labor as fair and from research showing that men who do little persist in seeing the allocation of household tasks as fair (Ward, 1993). Suitor (1991) replicated the oft-cited U-shaped curve of marital satisfaction by finding that wives' satisfaction with the division of household labor is highest in the preparental and postparental stages and lowest when children are present (i.e., when women do the most domestic work). In contrast, husbands' fairness ratings and satisfaction with housework show little variation across the life course.

Thompson (1991) refined Major's (1987) distributive justice framework to show how outcome values, comparison referents, and justifications shape gendered differences in entitlement that lead wives to evaluate unbalanced divisions of labor as fair (see also Ferree, 1990; Gager, 1998; Hochschild, 1989; Major, 1993; Pyke & Coltrane, 1996). In brief, wives should better grasp the injustice of the existing division of housework if they lack valued outcomes, compare their husband's contributions to their own, and reject justifications for unequal performance (Major, 1993; Thompson, 1991). Contrary to earlier findings showing little variation in fairness evaluations, many 1990s studies showed that wives' participation in household labor (measured in absolute hours, as a proportion of couple time in housework, or as responsibility for household management) is associated with variation in women's, and sometimes men's, sense of fairness (Greenstein, 1996b; Hawkins, Marshall, & Meiners, 1995; Mederer, 1993; Sanchez, 1994a; Sanchez & Kane, 1996). Although most people rate their own contributions as fair, men's lower levels of participation in household labor generally are associated with both men and women seeing more unfairness in the division of family work (Blair & Johnson, 1992; Dancer & Gilbert, 1993; Greenstein, 1996b; Sanchez 1994a), especially when men contribute little to the routine tasks of cooking, cleaning, and washing (DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; John et al., 1995; Lennon & Rosenfeld, 1994; Perry-Jenkins

& Folk, 1994; Robinson & Spitze, 1992; but see Wilkie, Ferree, & Ratcliff, 1998). Findings differ on how much men and women pay attention to their own contributions, but most studies find that when one spouse does less and the other does more, the chances of perceiving unfairness increase (Dancer and Gilbert, 1993; John et al., 1995; Robinson & Spitze, 1992). In contrast, as men do more of the occasional tasks (such as washing the car), both spouses are more likely to judge the division of household labor as fair to wives (DeMaris & Longmore, 1996).

Fairness evaluations also are influenced by employment, education, and ideology, but 1990s results were mixed. Several studies find a negative relationship between women's paid work hours and fairness evaluations (Greenstein, 1996b; Sanchez, 1994a; Sanchez & Kane, 1996; but see Blair & Johnson, 1992). Some find that men's greater employment hours are related to their own evaluations of fairness in the division of household labor (Ward, 1993), whereas others find that men's greater employment hours are related to their evaluations of unfairness (Robinson & Spitze, 1992). DeMaris & Longmore (1996) found that husbands' greater employment hours, relative to wives', encourage wives (but not husbands) to see the division of housework as fair to her. Women with less education than their husbands and those who perceive the costs of leaving the marriage to be high perceive more fairness (Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994; Wilkie et al., 1998), and higher levels of education for both spouses are associated with seeing less fairness in the division of labor (DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; John et al., 1995; Robinson & Spitze, 1992). Some studies show that women, and sometimes men, with more egalitarian gender attitudes see more unfairness to the wife in household labor allocation (Blair & Johnson, 1992; DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; John et al., 1995; Sanchez & Kane, 1996), and some find that women's fairness evaluations are disproportionately influenced by men's conventional gender attitudes (Sanchez, 1994a). Greenstein (1996b) noted a significant interaction between gender ideology and housework, with the actual division of labor having less effect on fairness evaluations the more conventional the wife's views on gender.

We can better understand fairness evaluations if we acknowledge the insight from gender construction theories that women (and sometimes men) perceive both their own and their spouse's housework to carry emotional messages, frequently representing love, caring, or appreciation

(Blain, 1994; Blair & Johnson, 1992; Coltrane, 1996; DeVault, 1991; Erickson, 1993; Gager, 1998; Hawkins et al., 1995; Johnson & Huston, 1998; Kane & Sanchez, 1994; Piña & Bengtson, 1993; Stohs, 1994; Thompson, 1993). Although this symbolic equation of housework and care can lead to demands for more task performance, it can also encourage women to consider men's expressions of affection or positive intent as sufficient, thereby lowering their expectations and judging current unbalanced labor arrangements as fair (Hochschild, 1989). In addition, men's contributions to housework tend to be noticed and negotiated, whereas women's are taken for granted (Robinson & Spitze, 1992). As predicted, the selection and use of cross-gender referents seems to lead women to judge divisions of labor as less fair (Hawkins et al., 1995), whereas the selection of same-gender referents is associated with evaluations of greater fairness (Coltrane, 1990; Gager, 1998). In a related finding, invoking high housekeeping standards tends to provide justification for husbands' nonperformance of household tasks (Allen & Hawkins, 1998; Coltrane, 1996; Ferree, 1990; Hawkins et al., 1995).

Other studies consider fairness as a mediating, or intervening, variable between the division of household labor and personal or marital well-being (Dancer & Gilbert, 1993; Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 1996; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994; Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994; Piña & Bengtson, 1993; Robinson & Spitze, 1992; Suito, 1991; Ward, 1993; Wilkie et al., 1998). Wives are less satisfied with the division of labor when the actual time they spend on housework is higher than what they would prefer to spend (Kluwer et al., 1996). Fairness evaluations also affect personal well-being. When the distribution of household tasks appears to be fair, wives display few symptoms of depression, but when it is perceived as unfair, women's depression is higher (Glass & Fujimoto, 1994; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994). Satisfaction with spousal help is positively associated with positive marital interaction, marital closeness, affirmation, and positive affect; it is negatively related to marital conflict, thoughts of divorce, negative affect, and depression (Piña & Bengtson, 1993). Similarly, although perceived unfairness predicts both unhappiness and distress for women, it predicts neither for men (Robinson & Spitze, 1992). Perceived fairness also contributes to marital satisfaction or marital quality, especially for women (Blair, 1993; Dancer & Gilbert, 1993; Suito, 1991; Ward, 1993; Wilkie et al., 1998).

Spouses who hold more comparable perceptions of fairness also report higher marital satisfaction (Dancer & Gilbert, 1993). Wives' perceptions of unfairness also are related to marital conflict (Kluwer et al., 1996; Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994; Stohs, 1995), with those couples having more conventional gender ideology more likely to avoid conflict and experience negative consequences (Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 1997). Finally, dissatisfaction with the household division of labor may be a more important catalyst for change than perceptions of its unfairness. Men are almost universally satisfied with the division of housework, whereas women are often less satisfied, especially if they hold egalitarian attitudes and like their paid work (Baxter & Western, 1998). Although findings about fairness evaluations vary considerably, the majority of studies in the 1990s concluded that the single most important predictor of a wife's fairness evaluation is what portion of the routine housework her husband contributes.

Outcome Assessments

Divisions of household labor are directly and indirectly linked to depression. Although detailed outcome studies are still rare, research indicates that performing larger amounts of routine, repetitive housework is associated with more depression in women and sometimes in men (Barnett & Shen, 1997; Glass & Fujimoto, 1994; Golding, 1990; Larson et al., 1994). Previous studies finding no such relationship for men typically did not differentiate between types of household labor nor control for the frequency and schedule flexibility of the tasks (see Barnett & Shen, 1997). Some researchers have found that women's "homemaker-role quality" moderates the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being (Barnett, 1994; Kibria, Barnett, Baruch, Marshall, & Pleck, 1990). It appears that it is primarily men's participation in the routine repetitive chores of cooking, cleaning, and washing that relieves women's burden, contributes to their sense of fairness, and hence lowers their chances of being depressed. For their part, men often report some difficulty assuming more responsibility for family work, although initial frustration is typically short lived (Coltrane, 1996; Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Hawkins et al., 1994).

Several studies also have found that marital satisfaction increases in relation to the amount of routine housework that is shared by spouses (Bierman & Wortman, 1991; Erickson, 1993; Orbuch &

Eyster, 1997; Piña & Bengtson, 1993). Most studies find that the fit between husband's and wife's ideology is extremely important to marital satisfaction, as is the congruence between spouses' attitudes and actions. In general, if spouses align their attitudes and divisions of household labor, then their marital happiness is higher (McHale & Crouter, 1992; Perry-Jenkins & Crouter, 1990). Because men continue to do substantially less housework than do women, however, a gender-bifurcated pattern emerges: Women who believe in sharing housework tend to have lower marital satisfaction than others and men who believe in sharing tend to have higher marital satisfaction than others (Lye & Biblarz, 1993). Similarly, when men are more egalitarian than wives, marital disagreements are fewer, but when wives are more egalitarian than husbands (the more typical case), then marital disagreements are more common (Lye & Biblarz, 1993). Because housework is typically perceived as optional for men and required of women, it is generally up to women to bring about change. Only when women perceive the division of labor to be unfair, does the level of marital conflict go up (Blair, 1993; Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994; Wilkie et al., 1998). Marital conflict, in turn is related to lower marital satisfaction and higher rates of depression. Women are thus faced with a double bind: They can push for change, threatening the relationship, or they can accept an unbalanced division of labor, labeling it "fair" (Hochschild, 1989).

Children's Housework

Household labor studies of the 1990s were also more likely to include children. Questions were asked about how much and under what conditions sons and daughters perform housework and what impact such performance has for the children and families. Using NSFH data, Blair (1992a) reported that in families with school-aged children, 5.9 hours of routine housework are performed by (all) children each week, representing about 13% of the routine housework hours for the household (almost as much as contributed by fathers). Children do the work because parents are attempting to socialize them or because the parents (and children) are responding to household labor demand (Blair, 1992a; Gill, 1998; Goodnow et al., 1991). According to Goodnow et al. (1991), children's housework is analyzed according to gender, age of child, and purpose of the tasks—primarily in terms of self versus family care. Younger chil-

dren's housework is less typed by gender than that of adults or teenagers (Hilton & Haldeman, 1991; McHale et al., 1990). As children approach the teenage years, however, they take on more tasks, which become more segregated by gender (Antill et al., 1996; Benin & Edwards, 1990; Goldscheider & Waite, 1991; Goodnow et al., 1991). Studies find that young teenage girls do about twice the amount of household labor as young teenage boys do (Juster & Stafford, 1991), with girls concentrating their efforts on routine inside chores of cooking and cleaning and boys concentrating their efforts on occasional outside chores such as yard care (Antill et al., 1996; Blair, 1992b; Goldscheider & Waite, 1991; McHale et al., 1990). Some researchers have found that children in two-parent, dual-earner families and children of highly educated parents do less housework than do children in other family types (Benin & Edwards, 1990; Demo & Acock, 1993; Manke et al., 1994; Waite & Goldscheider, 1992). Whereas girls in single-parent families often do all types of tasks and tend to put in more household work hours than girls in other family types, boys in single-parent families have been found to do less routine housework than boys in two-parent families (Hilton & Haldeman, 1991; McHale et al., 1990). If the mother's hours of employment are longer, children (especially girls) perform more of the housework, suggesting that daughters are substituting for the mother's hours (Bergen, 1991; Blair, 1992a; Goldscheider & Waite, 1991). Some studies also have suggested that daughters' housework time substitutes for fathers' housework time (Manke et al., 1994; Waite & Goldscheider, 1992; but see Padgett, 1997), although girls' participation in household tasks seems to be dwindling to boys' levels in many households (Goldscheider & Waite, 1991). Stepparents, parents with egalitarian gender ideology, and those who give their children more encouragement are more likely to have sons who share more of the routine housework (Antill et al., 1996; Blair, 1992b; Demo & Acock, 1993; Weisner & Garnier, 1994). Conversely, first-married biological parents and those with more conventional gender ideology are more likely to assign gender-typed tasks to their children and to require that daughters do more (Benin & Edwards, 1990; Blair, 1992b). Following a similar pattern, boys from dual-earner families who do more housework are more satisfied, less stressed, and have better relations with their parents, whereas boys from single-earner families who do more housework report being less satisfied, more

stressed, and have worse relations with their parents (Crouter, McHale, & Bartko, 1993). Finally, adult sons living with their parents create more housework than they perform, whereas adult daughters perform more housework than they create (South & Spitze, 1994). In addition, Glenn (1992) discussed how privileged White children learn a subtle form of racism watching women of color perform the dirtiest domestic work.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, most men still do much less housework than women do, with married men creating about as much demand for household labor as they perform. In the past decade, researchers have documented how women's contributions to housework have declined and shown how men's contributions have increased at a slower pace. Although we can better predict variation in women's performance of housework, we are just beginning to understand why men do so little and to specify the conditions associated with men doing more. We also have begun to isolate causes and consequences of various divisions of paid and unpaid labor for individuals, families, and society.

Women still perform most routine cooking and cleaning tasks, and although fewer men confine their efforts to the occasional outside chore, husbands rarely take full responsibility for a wide range of household tasks. We now know that when men perform more of the routine housework, employed women feel that the division of labor is fairer, are less depressed, and enjoy higher levels of marital satisfaction. Using refined measures and more representative samples, we also know that the employment hours of both men and women, their relative earnings, their beliefs about gender and family, and their living arrangements all influence the allocation of household tasks. Family size, age, life stage, ethnicity, presence and contribution of children, and a host of other factors also enter into the household labor allocation process. Although we cannot yet adjudicate between most competing theories, we are better able to understand that household labor embodies a set of complex material and symbolic practices that constitute and reproduce daily life. Because most housework continues to be performed by women, wives, and daughters, and because most women buy out of onerous domestic tasks when they can afford to, we ought not lose sight of the fact that domestic labor allocation is embedded in social arrangements that perpetuate class, race, and gen-

der inequities. The task before us is thus to specify in more detail how the performance of housework in different families is implicated in various cultural, economic, and gender-reproductive processes. In particular, we need to do a better job of assessing contributions to routine chores in a wider range of households, use both absolute and proportional measures, and focus on how relative resources, gender ideology, interpersonal relations, and economic factors influence fairness evaluations and individual well-being. Only by refining our measurement and data analysis techniques, specifying linkages among different levels of analysis, and continuing to evaluate competing theoretical approaches will we be able to assess how and why household labor is associated with gender and how it might change in the future.

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