

Racial-Ethnic Differences in U.S. Married Women's and Men's Housework

Liana C. Sayer, The Ohio State University, Sayer.12@sociology.osu.edu

Leigh Fine, The Ohio State University, Fine.34@sociology.osu.edu

Abstract: Black husbands do more housework than white husbands but Black wives do no more housework than White wives (John and Shelton 1997; Orbach and Custer 1995; Orbach and Eyster 1997). Studies are limited because they do not explore how race-ethnicity affects housework, they compare only Blacks and Whites, and they overlook timing and duration of housework. We use time diary data from the 2003-2007 ATUS to address these limitations. We hypothesize one source of racial-ethnic variation in household work is disparate employment conditions and also anticipate the association of economic resources and housework may differ by race-ethnicity. Preliminary results indicate race-ethnicity affects hours of housework and associations of earnings with housework vary among women by race-ethnicity. We will extend early results with OLS and event history models to estimate racial-ethnic variation in hours, engagement in, and the timing and duration of housework and how these are conditioned by economic resources.

Despite their movement into paid work and widespread normative acceptance of shared marital roles, married women continue to do much more housework compared with married men. Further, women's housework levels are influenced more strongly than men's by employment variables, such as hours worked, occupation, and earnings (Sayer 2005). To explain this, gender theorists point to the pervasive effects of how gender figures into identities, family interactions, and societal norms and opportunity structures (Risman 2004). The extent of this configuration varies — at least in the U.S. — by race-ethnicity because of how race-ethnicity conditions access to economic resources and influences gender relations within marriages (Geist 2005; Orbach and Eyster 1997). Prior work shows Black husbands do more housework than white husbands but Black wives do no more housework than White wives (John and Shelton 1997; Orbach and Custer 1995; Orbach and Eyster 1997). Existing studies are limited, however, because they do not explore the specific means through which race-ethnicity affects housework and compare only Blacks and Whites, meaning we know little about housework differences among Hispanic and Asian married couples. Studies have also focused only on differences in amounts of housework and the gender gap in housework, neglecting salient dimensions such as the timing and duration of household tasks. Work from the 1970s indicates that one-third of household activities are embedded within a specific sequential pattern (Fenstermaker 1996). We analyze differences in timing and duration, as well as average hours, and seek to link different racial-ethnic gendered patterns of household work to racial-ethnic variation in employment and economic resources to provide a more nuanced lens on racial-ethnic variation in how women and men manage temporal constraints in meeting work and family obligations.

We hypothesize that one source of racial-ethnic variation in key dimensions of household work may be the starkly disparate employment conditions experienced by women and men of different race-ethnicities. Pervasive post-industrial workplace transformations associated with global competition and corporate downsizing have replaced stable, standard employment with widespread patterns of temporal instability and intensity. Very long and short work hours have increased sharply, as the limited supply of jobs means many workers may put in long hours as a hedge against job insecurity whereas others with fewer skills may combine two part-time jobs as a hedge against income insecurity. In 2000, 9% of employed men worked fewer than 30 hours per week and 27% worked more than 50 hours per week; comparable estimates for employed women are 20% working fewer than 30 hours and 11% working more than 50 hours (Jacobs and Gerson 2004). The 24/7 society has also increased the proportion of workers in jobs requiring non-standard or part-time hours (or both). Only 26% of employed men and 33% of employed women put in all of their employment hours in a standard week (Monday through Friday) and standard hours (between 8 am and 5 pm). Additionally, one spouse works nonstandard hours in 35% of dual earner couples with children (Presser 2003).

Labor market changes have affected the majority of individuals in the United States, but have eroded the labor market positions of Black and Hispanic women and men in particular. Black and Hispanic women and men are concentrated in low-skill and low-status jobs, the same jobs that are more likely to feature part-time or nonstandard hours, little job security, and limited options for upward mobility. (Grodsky and Pager 2001; Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson 2000; Pettit and Ewert 2009). Although Black women are less likely to be employed part-time hours compared with White women, they are overrepresented in occupations with high aggregate rates of part-time employment (Pettit and Ewert 2009). Additionally, rates of involuntary exits from the labor force and long-term unemployment or under-employment are higher among Blacks and Hispanics (Roscigno 2007).

Variation in employment conditions may explain some racial-ethnic differences in the level and nature of household work and in the gender gap in housework. Individuals who are employed long or nonstandard hours may experience more difficulty coordinating family and job schedules and finding enough time for obligatory responsibilities, as well as relaxation and sleep. Long employment hours reduce men's and women's housework, albeit more sharply for women (Sayer 2005). Two studies find nonstandard employment hours reduce mothers' ability to devote time to and coordinate housework and child care, in particular when work occurs during the evening (Presser 2004; Wight, Raley, and Bianchi 2008). Being present during "standard" caregiving time (e.g. daytime or after-school hours) may

also be salient for fathers, as two studies report that fathers who are employed on weekends spend less time caring for children compared to fathers who work standard hours during the week (Almeida 2004; Nock and Kingston 1988). Nonstandard hours also reduce gender differences in household work, because of “tag-team” parenting (Brayfield 1995; Presser 2003). About 30% of married mothers work nonstandard hours because fathers are available to care for children when the mother is employed (Presser and Cox 1997). However, because many household activities lack temporal elasticity, such as making dinner for an evening family meal or picking children up from child care, nonstandard or long work hours may reduce the extent of or time in these types of tasks more strongly. Further, although individuals who are voluntarily out of the labor force have more time available for household work, those who are unemployed but seeking employment face time constraints from job searches, time-intensive interactions with public service agencies (e.g. unemployment insurance, food banks, and public assistance) and limited resources. Hence, the level, timing, and duration of housework may be lower among Black and Hispanic women, as compared with White and Asian women, because the former are more likely to be employed in jobs with temporal demands that shrink time available for housework and more likely to be involuntarily out of the labor force. However, temporal variations in the nature of men’s jobs by race-ethnicity may increase Black and Hispanic men’s housework, vis-à-vis levels among White and Asian men, because their higher rates of nonstandard or involuntary part-time hours may increase time at home during the day, when many household tasks are typically performed. In sum, variation in employment conditions may be key source of racial-ethnic variation in household work.

It is also possible that the association of economic resources and housework may differ by race-ethnicity among women and, perhaps, among men. Recent work by Gupta (Gupta 2007) shows that women’s housework is more responsive to her absolute level of earnings than to relative earnings. This “autonomy” effect of earnings may result from women using own earnings to outsource or “opt out” of housework, a process that may differ among Black, Hispanic, Asian, and White women, and perhaps men. For example, levels of and gender gaps in housework production may be lower in Black married couples compared to other couples because of Black women’s higher historical levels of employment and consequently long-standing need to balance work and family responsibilities. Race-ethnicity also likely conditions the symbolic meaning and thus association of economic resources and housework. Some qualitative work suggests that rather than seeing employment as competing with household responsibilities, Black and Latina mothers perceive their involvement in paid work as essential to

household maintenance (Dill 1998; Segura 1993). In addition, the historical relegation of Black women to jobs in domestic work means the gendered and racialized power implicit in the use of resources to buy out of housework may be more apparent and resisted in Black married couples. For example, black men's higher levels of housework have been interpreted as evidence that they see housework as simply part of being a good husband and not something higher earnings absolve them of doing (John and Shelton 1997). In contrast, more patriarchal familistic cultural traditions among Hispanics and Asians suggest earnings may have no association with housework for either women or men, because housework is simply considered "women's" work regardless of earnings. Even accounting for income differences, Black couples are less likely to purchase housework substitutes than are Whites (Cohen 1998). The historical experience of Black women in domestic service points to the possibility of greater resistance to hiring household help, because of the continued relegation of women of color to these type of service jobs.

In this analysis we extend prior work by analyzing patterns and sources of racial-ethnic differences in the amount of and timing of housework. After presenting a rich description of the extent of racial-ethnic and gender variation in housework, we will investigate two questions: first, do multiple temporal aspects of employment, specifically employment status and levels of and timing of employment hours, moderate associations between race-ethnicity and the amount of and timing of women's and men's housework; and second, does the influence of economic resources (employment levels and quality indicators and earnings) on the level and timing of women's and men's housework differ by race-ethnicity?

DATA

To address these questions, we use pooled time diary data from the 2003-2007 American Time Use Study, or ATUS (Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S.Census Bureau 2008). This is the first federally administered time diary survey in the United States and was designed to collect nationally representative data on how adults allocate time to paid work, unpaid work, self care, and leisure (Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S.Census Bureau 2004). Time diaries cover the period from 4 am to 4 am on the day prior to the telephone interview, and information is collected on all types of activity episodes, persons present during the activity, and where the activity took place. The ATUS sample consists of all noninstitutionalized U.S. residents age 15 and over and is drawn from outgoing rotations of the Current Population Survey. As such, the ATUS also contains high-quality data on employment,

earnings, and salient household and individual characteristics. The response rate was 57% in 2003, 58% in 2004, 57% in 2005, 55.1 in 2006 and 52.5 in 2007. We pool the five years of data to reduce variability from relying on only a single year of data and increase the sample size of women and men in each racial-ethnic category. A number of studies have established the accuracy and reliability of the time diary method, in particular for household activities (Juster 1999; Marini and Shelton 1993; Robinson and Godbey 1999). The preliminary analytic sample consists of 26,795 married women (n=14,778) and married men (n=12,017) ages 18 to 64. Weights are used in all analyses to correct for nonresponse and adjust for the ATUS oversample of weekend days. Our analytic strategy for the preliminary analysis presented here is to use the entire sample. In analyses presented at the PAA, we plan to examine variation for two smaller subsamples, one including only employed women and men and the other including only employed women and men who report employment activities on the time diary day.

VARIABLES

We will examine hours per day and timing of married women's and men's core housework (housecleaning, laundry, cooking, and meal cleanup) and occasional housework (yard work, house and vehicle maintenance and repairs, and household paperwork). The hours per day in these tasks is constructed by summing time in these activities across the diary day. For the timing of core and occasional housework, we first create a person-minute file from the diary episode file, with 1440 records for every individual (representing the 1440 minutes in a 24-hour day). From this, we are able to construct measures that indicate the proportion of individuals engaged in core and occasional housework at each minute of the day, the amount of core and occasional housework in absolute and relative terms, the duration of core and occasional housework during specific time intervals of the day, and the probability of transitioning from employment into core or occasional housework, or into other activities, such as leisure. We assess racial-ethnic differences within gender groups (e.g. comparing Black and White women) and also assess variation in the within-race gender gap in housework.

The ATUS race-ethnicity question offers multiracial respondents the option of selecting multiple categories. For the sake of comparison with earlier studies, we code respondents into only one racial-ethnic category based on the first category chosen. Sample sizes were too small to include Native American Indians and to disaggregate the pan-ethnic categories of Hispanic and Asian. Hence, we focus on four broad groups: Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Whites.

Employment variables include measures of employment status and hours and measures of the timing of employment activities. Employment status distinguishes between individuals employed part-time and full-time, and for those who are not employed, differentiates unemployed women and men from those who are out of the labor force and not actively seeking employment. We also include a dummy variable that indicates if the individual has multiple jobs.

For analyses restricted to employed individuals, we use a measure of hours of work based on self-reports of usual weekly employment hours. The variable is coded into 4 categories designed to incorporate short and long part-time and short and long full-time hours distinctions. For women, categories are 1 to 14 hours, 15 to 34 hours, 35 to 40 hours, and 41 and higher; for men, categories are 1 to 34 hours, 35 to 40 hours, 41 to 50 hours, and 51 and higher hours.

To assess quality aspects of jobs, we include a dummy indicator for hours that vary week to week, whether the job is in the private or public sector, and an occupation indicator that classifies workers into professional and skilled and unskilled nonprofessional jobs. For employed workers who report paid work on the diary day, we also examine three measures of nonstandard employment, created using the person-minute diary episode file. We construct the nonstandard employment indicators from the time diary because the ATUS questionnaire did not collect other measures of nonstandard employment schedules. We use Presser's (2003) definition of standard work hours as those that occur between 8:00 am to 4:00 pm to classify hours as standard or nonstandard. We then construct a dummy variable indicating if any paid employment is reported outside of these standard hours, and measures of the absolute hours and relative amount of employment time done during nonstandard times. We will also predict the probability of working nonstandard hours as a quality-check of our results with prior work, following the strategy of Wight, Raley, and Bianchi (2008).

Weekly earnings will be used as an additional measure of economic resources. Because of skewed earnings distribution, we log earnings for those individuals who report earnings and assign a value of 0 to respondents who report no earnings. We also include a dummy variable for earnings in models that include all women and men in our sample to test earnings thresholds results. We plan to explore spline models to test if earnings have different effects on household work at different levels of earnings and if patterns vary by race-ethnicity. Respondents with missing data on earnings are excluded from our preliminary analysis (about 10% of respondents did not report data on earnings). Preliminary

results indicated minor differences in results when multiple imputation was used to address missing values.

We will also include variables for education (college versus noncollege), age and age-squared, presence and age of children, employment status and hours of partner, and diary day in all models. We plan to estimate models separately for individuals with weekday diary days and those with weekend diary days to test for systematic differences by diary day.

Preliminary results presented in Table 1 shows White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian married women’s and men’s average (standard deviation) hours per day in and the percentage reporting core and occasional housework. The bottom panel shows racial-ethnic differences in the gender gap in married women’s and men’s core and occasional housework.

Table 1. Racial-Ethnic Differences in Married Women’s and Men’s Daily Household Work

	White			Black			Hispanic			Asian	
	Hours	SD	% Reporting	Hours	SD	% Reporting	Hours	SD	% Reporting	Hours	SD
Married Women											
Core	2.02	2.02	0.88	1.81	2.08	0.79	2.98	2.50	0.90	2.33	2.11
Occasional	0.72	1.35	0.58	0.41	0.94	0.43	0.40	0.93	0.41	0.45	0.73
N	11307			912			2020			539	
Married Men											
Core	0.64	1.16	0.55	0.65	1.12	0.51	0.54	1.09	0.41	0.57	1.08
Occasional	1.08	1.96	0.53	0.63	1.45	0.42	0.77	1.73	0.44	0.53	1.04
N	9185			822			1561			449	

Three findings stand out from Table 1. First, Hispanic married women do 1 hour more and Asian married women do about 20 minutes more core housework than White and Black women. Variation in core housework is substantial among all women as indicated by the large standard deviation relative to mean hours. In addition to spending less time cooking and cleaning, Black married women are less likely to engage in core housework: about 80% report housework on the diary day compared with about 90% of White, Hispanic, and Asian women. However, White married women spend more time and are more likely to report doing occasional housework, such as yard work or household maintenance, compared to other women.

Second, racial-ethnic variation in men’s core housework is minor: all men do between 35 to 40 minutes of core housework a day (differences between White and Asian men are significant, other

comparisons are not significant). About 50% of White, Black, and Asian men but only 41% of Hispanic men engage in core housework on the diary day. Differences by race-ethnicity in occasional housework are more substantial: just over one hour per day among White men compared with about 45 minutes for Hispanic, 35 minutes for Black, and 30 minutes for Asian men. Results indicate that earlier research that reported Black married men did more housework than White married men looked only at aggregate housework (using nonrepresentative or recall survey data) and thus missed key racial-ethnic variations in core and occasional household chores.

Third, the gender gap in core housework is and highest for Hispanic and Asian married couples and lowest for Black married couples. For example, Hispanic women do 5.5 times as much core housework than Hispanic men, whereas Black women do only 2.7 times more core housework compared to Black men. Hispanic and Asian women are also over twice as likely to engage in housework than Hispanic and Asian men. The smaller gender gap in core housework among Black married women and men results from Black women spending less time cooking and cleaning, not from greater investments in core housework among Black men. Last, across racial-ethnic categories, married men spend more time in occasional housework than married women, but women are as likely as men (or slightly more likely) to engage in occasional chores.

Preliminary multivariate analyses indicate that race-ethnicity does not differentiate men's core housework but White and Hispanic men do more occasional housework, net of model controls (education, employment status, parental status, age, and weekend diary day), compared to Black and Asian men. Considering women, net of model controls, Hispanic and Asian women do more cooking and cleaning compared with White and Black women. Further, the inverse relationship between women's economic resources and housework is steeper for Hispanic women compared with other women.

By the time of the PAA, we will extend these analyses with additional measures of household work and models that will estimate how much of the racial-ethnic variation in women's and men's core and occasional housework is accounted for by disparate conditions of employment and other salient compositional differences and to what extent racial-ethnic variation remains unexplained. We plan to use multiple analytic strategies. First, we will estimate ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions to assess how employment status, hours, quality indicators and earnings affect hours per day of core and occasional housework. We will also estimate logistic regression models to estimate the influence of employment and economic resource variables on engagement in core and occasional housework. Last,

we plan to estimate event history models to estimate the influence of employment and economic resources variables on the timing of and transitions into core and occasional housework. Our results promise to shed light on the extent white employment advantage is mirrored by advantage in household work.

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