

A Criticism of Operational Measurement in the Study of **Division of Domestic Labor**

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Abstract

The purposes of this study are to investigate some operational problems in the past study of the housework allocation, and to develop a better measurement approach and methodology for future research.

experimental research usually includes two parts: An dependent variables and independent variables. The operational measurement of either one can affect the results. Thus, in this paper, the operational problems will be described and critiqued in these two parts, based on the past research of housework allocations. Independent variables are mainly developed from three perspective: time availability, role ideology, and resources. However, the different operations and methodologies of these three perspectives can be strongly related to totally different results, thus researchers still can not give a consistent conclusion. In addition, among dependent variables, housework allocations used by relative distribution measurement or by absolute time-use measurement can also cause different results. Therefore, in this paper, not only the operational and methodological problems are reviewed, but also a better operational measurement and methodologies are suggested, so that the limitation of the study of housework allocations will be improved.



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Housework has become more salient during the past two decades. Traditionally, it was not only neglected but also regarded as a contemptible female job. However, the increase in the proportion of women employed in the labor market has affected a dramatic change in the traditional division of labor. Men are no longer the only providers in families. Women also play an important economic role in the family (Pleck, 1985). However, even when wives become employed full-time, the increase in the amount of time husbands spend on housework is less than the increase in the amount of time wives spend in the labor market (Berardo, Shehan, and Leslie, 1987; Bergen, 1991; Grant, et al., 1990; Kamo, 1988; Pleck, 1985). The majority of employed wives perform two to three times more domestic chores than their husbands (Berk, 1980, 1985; Kamo, 1988; Warner, 1986). Therefore, researchers started to ask why many men fail to share domestic chores equally even when their wives are employed fulltime.

Historically, home economists were the earliest professionals to study housework seriously. However, early interest in the study of housework did not focus on the division of housework but on the home management and the related education of housewives. The main purposes of these studies were to apply the principles of Shain-May TANG A Criticism of Operational Measurement in the Study of Division of Domestic Labor

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scientific management and economic efficiency to the conducting of family life (Ahlander and Bahr, 1995). Not until the 1950s, when functionalists focused their attention on the division of labor in the nuclear family, did some of these sociologists pay much attention to housework. Basically, functionalists believe in a natural division of the sexes into functions best suited to their biological capacities and their subsequent family roles. Thus, housework should be female work, and market work should be male work.

Shortly thereafter and after Blood and Wolfe's (1960) study of family dynamics and household task performance, resource theory

proffered another important perspective by which to explain housework allocation in the 1960s The key concept of resource theory is that in the division of housework, person in the relationship one with more resources tends to have more power and to be able to more easily to escape his/her own share of housework. In the 1970s another important theory of housework allocation appeared: Becker's New Home Economics. It suggested that couples arranged the division of labor in the family to achieve the greatest possible utility. Therefore, how a family divides its labor differs based on the demands of family members. In the 1970s and 1980s came numerous feminist contributions to the study of housework. Feminists suggested that gender inequality in the division of labor was not only due to policies but also to social values (Anderson, 1988; Ferree, 1990). They believed that changes in policies could fix only the surface of gender inequality, and that only changes in the value of sex roles would get to the hear of the

problem (Anderson, 1988). All of these theories constitute the main perspectives on housework allocation.

In past studies, three perspectives based on these different theories have usually been used to explain the division of domestic labor: time availability, role ideology, and relative resources or power. However, these studies do not have consistent results. The most important problem is related to methodological decision in elaborating researchers' conceptions in the study of domestic labor. Therefore, to understand previous studies' inconsistent results with regard to the division of housework, we need to look at how the division of domestic labor was operationally measured. A research model usually includes two parts: independent variables--different approaches related to division of domestic labor--and the dependent variable--domestic labor. The operational measurement of either one can affect the results. Therefore, the main purposes of this study are to describe and critique the measurement and modeling of domestic labor based on past research, and to develop a more accurate measure in these two areas.

Measurement of three perspectives in explaining division of domestic labor

Time availability, role ideology, and relative resources or power are usually used to explain the division of domestic labor. Evaluating the evidence for these three perspectives is not straightforward, however, since methodological and ideological differences produce different conclusions on the effects of division

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of housework. Although the different conclusions may be due to the measurement of the dependent variable, they may also result from the different operations of these three perspectives in terms of the independent variables. Here, I would like to start from these three perspectives to discuss some operational problems and to develop a more accurate method of measuring each perspective.

Time availability

Time availability perspective refers to women's employment and implicitly reflects the economic dimension of family labor. This perspective suggests that available time determines the

division of household labor: in particular, that the time people spend on labor market work competes with the time they spend on domestic labor. Therefore, the more the hours of paid work, the fewer the hours of unpaid housework and the greater the gap the employed spouse must fill.

The time availability hypothesis is most often put in operation in a woman's employment status in two ways: if a woman is employed or not (Baruch and Barnett, 1986: Crouter et al., 1987; Pleck, 1985), and how many hours a woman works (Rexroat and Shehan, 1987; Bergen, 1991). The problem for the first operation is how research defines the "employed" status. Are part-time jobs included or not? If yes, some biases will appear. Since women with part-time jobs still do an amount of housework similar to that of housewives, and full-time employed women do much less housework than housewives, combining full-time and part-time employed women will reduce the difference in housework

performed between employed and unemployed women. Even if researchers set up three categories--full-time job, part-time job, and no job--there still remains one problem of concern. If a full-time job is defined as working more than 20 hours per week, whereas a part-time job is defined as working from 5 to 20 hours per week, what is the difference between a womah with a full-time job (working 21 hours per week) and a woman with part-time job (working 20 hours per week) in performing their housework? The answer probably is insignificant. Since this measure will increase the standard error within groups and decrease the standard error between groups, researchers can not easily examine the time effect on the division of housework. Much research (e. g. Bergen, 1990; Tang, 1993; Rexroat and Shehan, 1987) has reduced the problem of using categorical variables--employed or not--as indicators by using the number of worked hours instead do. However, the limitation of using number of hours worked as an indicator is that it does not show the work schedule. The husband of an employed wife who works from 6pm to 8pm will probably do more housework than the husband of an employed wife who works from 10am to 4pm even if the latter's wife works more hours than the former's wife. This is because families create a great deal of housework from 6pm to 8pm, such as preparing food, washing dishes, playing with kids, helping kids take showers and go to bed, and so on. If the wife is not at home, all this housework will supposedly be performed by someone else, and usually that person is her husband. Therefore, the measure of

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time availability should include both indicators of worked hours and the work schedule.

Like time availability, a life cycle variable that affects the housework time required of family members is also mentioned in studies on division of housework. Usually, research on division of domestic labor uses number and age of children as the indicators in measuring the family life cycle. Since young children cannot independently take care of themselves, they need an adult's care. Rexroat and Shehan (1987), in their research concerning how family life cycle affects spouses' time, indicated that during a child's early years, both parents spend more time on housework. Hafstrom and Schram (1983), Nickols and Metzen (1982), Sanik (1981), and Walker and Woods (1976) all support the life-cycle assumption that the age of the youngest child affects the husbands' time in housework. And the more the young children stay at home, the more the parents will spend their time and energy on domestic chores (Rexroat and Shehan, 1987; Geerken and Gove, 1983).

Although both indicators are good for measuring family demand, the problem is that some research only focus on one indicator, the ages of the children (Hafstrom and Schram, 1983). This can not measure the time demand accurately, since not only the age of children but also the number of young children will affect the time demand at the same time. The younger the children, the more time is demanded from family; but, also, the more the young children in the family, the more the housework created. In addition, not only the age and number of children but also the

children's sex and characteristics will affect parental housework. A young girl usually does more housework for her parents than a young boy (Manke, et al., 1994; Hilton and Haldeman, 1991), and an active baby may consume more parental energy than a quiet baby. Also, the family structure will affect the time demand on parents. In an extended family, an elderly and weak person might need more care and thus create more housework, while a healthy adult may share some housework. Therefore, to accurately measure the housework time demanded of families, it is necessary to include more variables, such as a baby's characteristics and family structure.

Role ideology

This perspective notes that less traditional sex role attitudes might lead to a less traditional division of household labor, while more traditional sex role attitudes might lead to a more traditional division of labor at home regardless of the wife's employment status. Role ideology is usually measured in two ways: by directly asking about respondents' value in several dimensions (e. g. Huber and Spitze, 1983; Ferree, 1991); and by using education as an indirect indicator (e. g. Farkas, 1976; Lopata, 1980).

Ross (1987) noted that the best way to operationalize values is to ask respondents directly. However, thus far, research on the effect of role ideology has not had consistent methods by which to measure it. Some value dimensions focus on equality between husband and wife (Tang, 1993); some emphasize traditional sex role ideology (Pleck, 1985); and some are concerned with both

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equality and sex role ideology (Huber and Spitze, 1983). Although all of these questions reflect individual values in role ideology, they have different meanings and report different parts of individual values. Another problem is that when researchers use several value dimensions, they simply add the score of each dimension to get a sum of the role ideology score. This assumes that each question has the same weight and that the respondent categories in each question have the same distance. Actually, it is rare that several dimensions have the same weight in measuring one thing (Rossi, Wright, and Anderson, 1983). At the same time, the distances between respondent categories (such as strongly agree, agree, no strong opinion, disagree, strongly disagree) are different. Usually the distance between strongly agree and agree is closer than the distance between agree and middle response, no opinion (Rossi, Wright, and Anderson, 1983). Therefore, the sum of respondent scores is not an accurate way to measure role ideology. Researchers using this kind of measure should weigh the dimension and respondent categories and then sum up these scores to get a score of sex-role ideology.

The other measure is to use education as an indicator. Although a well-educated person tend to reflect less traditional attitudes, this relationship does not mean education is equal to role ideology. The education variable is also related to income, socioeconomic status, and other variables. When researchers use education as a value indicator, they should be wary of the indefiniteness of the education values link. Other factors, such as income or occupation, may have a more serious affect on role

ideology. In addition, some researchers argue that education can also reflect the relative power balance in the family (Huber and Spitze, 1983). This link yields even more ambiguous problems for researchers. Hence, education, hiding different meanings, is not a good indicator to operationalize the concept of role ideology.

In order to better evaluate this perspective, values should be measured directly by asking respondents rather than indirectly, and the values of both spouses should be measured and included in the model. Since one individual's values are often inconsistent with another, collecting role ideology responses from each spouse is necessary for accuracy. In addition, questions should be weighed before all dimension scores are summed up to get a role ideology score. Factor analysis is a good way to weigh each question.

<u>Relative resources and power</u>

The resources perspective centers on the relative power of husbands and wives. It also sees a play of social resources in negotiation over the division of housework. The one with more resources (such as a higher education status, income, or occupation) tends to have more power. And then, she/he has more opportunities to negotiate or bargain with her/his spouse with regard to the division of domestic labor and with regard to decision making in other arenas. Ross (1987) also indicated that since housework is devalued, unrewarded, and considered onerous and menial, the spouse with more power tends to be able to delegate it to the other. Therefore, the higher the resources and power, the less the amount of domestic labor done.

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However, severe problems exist in the operationalization of husbands' and wives' power. Usually, researchers use the outcome of decision making or the demographic variables, such as education and income, as measure indicators. However, either measure has its problems. One of the fundamental problems of using the outcome of decision making is that it gives a rather static picture of family power relations. It is incapable of tapping the dynamic nature of family power processes. Instead, it focuses entirely on one stage of the power process--the outcome (Shehan and Lee, 1990). A second criticism of this measure is that its particular selection of decision areas may be biased. Neither family economics nor active decisions can provide the whole picture of marital power. In addition, another criticism has been raised about when the data of decision making is collected by self-report measures. Often times, the measure may include only one person. Thus the congruence between spouses' perception of marital power is of central concern. Also, this measure that focuses on the marital dyad while ignoring the fact that other family members may play a central role in decision making has been criticized.

The other measures used as indicators of marital power or resources are education and income. However, some researchers do not agree that these variables make good indicators. Ross (1987) argued that although a husband's education is positively related to his income, these two variables appear to be correlated with the household division of labor in opposite ways. More highly educated husbands do more housework and more highly paid husbands do less housework. Therefore, husbands' education and

income probably do not reflect the same thing. Ross pointed out that because education is confounded with values, it is not a good measure of power. However, Ericksen, Yancey, and Ericksen (1979) and Maret and Finlay (1984) believed that a husband's income and a wife's education were significantly related to power in deciding the division of domestic labor. They found the higher the income a husband earns, the less the housework he does; and the higher the education his wife has, the more the housework he does. This result is consistent with the assumption that education and income may also affect marital power and resources, but within same sex.

Blumberg and Coleman (1989), studying the gender balance of power, also indicated that one of the most problematic areas in current research is its treatment of marital power: an overly simple fashion. Blumberg believed that since power is multidimensional and sophisticated, one dimension cannot measure it very well. Hence, Blumberg uses three components in his power theory to measure the wife's overall economic power: (1) relative male/female economic power, the earnings ratio of the husband to the wife; (2) the woman's absolute level of economic resources, and (3) the woman's degree of independent control over economic resources. However, Blumberg's model focuses too much on the economic effects that may result from a biased question selection for measuring power. Therefore, the indicator of measuring power or resources still needs further investigation. Until consistent indicators are established, research will yield conflicting conclusions.



Measurement of domestic labor

The measurement of the division of domestic labor, in particular, has been characterized by inconsistency. The main reasons are two: (1) researchers use different items of chores to measure domestic labor, and (2) researchers tend to use one of two conceptually distinct measures: relative distribution measures and absolute time-use measures.

The items of housework

Using different family chores to measure housework will

result in inconsistent conclusions. The item of childcare is a good example. Among the household tasks, Blood and Wolfe (1965) proposed several items which most families perform: repairing things around the house, mowing the lawn, shoveling the sidewalk, keeping track of the money and the bills, doing the grocery shopping, preparing breakfast, and doing the evening dishes. They argued that since many couples do not have children, childcare tasks ought not be included in these tasks. However, for families with children, the effect of children on the division of domestic labor is salient. Hence, some studies still consider child care as one part of housework (such as Barnett and Baruch, 1987; Baruch and Barnett, 1981; Bergen, 1990; Bird, Bird, and Scruggs, 1984; Pleck and Staines, 1985; and Presser, 1988). The results of these two kinds of measurement are different, especially when it comes to the effect of the predictor, family life cycle, since this variable is strongly related to parents' time devotion to childcare.

A National Survey of Families Households (NSFH) data provide even more detailed household tasks with the exception of childcare. The household tasks include "preparing meals; washing dishes and cleaning up after meals; cleaning the house; doing outdoor and other household maintenance tasks (lawn and yard work, household repair, painting, etc.); shopping for groceries and other household goods; washing, ironing, and mending; paying bills and keeping financial records; and automobile maintenance and repair." However, the limitation of child care tasks in the data is that only respondents with children ages four or younger estimated their own hours and their partners' hours "in a typical day spent taking care of the child's physical needs, including feeding, bathing, dressing and putting him/her to bed." Although children aged from 5 to 11 usually need less care (especially with regard to time demanded) from a family than children aged 5 or younger, they still create some housework for their parents. Therefore, the variable "childcare" that only includes children aged 4 or younger is insufficient to describe the whole picture of childcare situations among different families. Because the culture and environment of the U.S. and Taiwan differ by quite a bit, the main items of housework done differ as well. Some main chores are the same (including preparing meals; washing dishes; cleaning house; shopping for groceries and other household goods; washing, ironing, and mending; paying bills and keeping financial records; and taking care of children), while others are different (such as doing outdoor and other household maintenance tasks or automobile maintenance and repair). Taiwan

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is a small island. Most people live in apartments or big buildings. Outdoor work such as lawn and yard work or household repairs are done by only a few persons. Although automobiles are more popular than before, not many people do automobile repair. In addition, Taiwan's parents pay much more attention to children's school performance. Thus, they tend to spend more time directing their children's homework than do American parents. Therefore, to study Taiwan's situation, some adjustment in the items of housework should be made.

The relative distribution measures

The relative distribution measures are conceptualized by researchers concerned about how husbands and wives divide housework and childcare, rather than about how much and what kinds of housework each actually does. On the other hand, the relative measure emphatically describes husbands' or wives' contributions relative to their spouses or relative to the total amount performed, so that domestic labor is conceptualized as the outcome of a social process that reflects a negotiation in interactive family relationships (Bergen, 1990).

Usually, the technique of measuring relative contributions in division of housework involves a rating system such as: myself always, myself more, equal, partner more, partner always (e.g. Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Clark, Nye, and Gecas, 1978; Huber and Spitz, 1983; Ferree, 1991); by the father alone, by the parents together, and by the mother alone (e.g. Baruch an Barnett, 1981); or wife mostly or always, wife more than husband, husband and wife

equally, husband more than wife, and husband mostly or always (e.g. Coltrane, 1990). The advantage of this type of measure is that it is relatively easy for individuals to answer (Pleck, 1985). However, two major problems emerge from this sort of measurement procedure. One is that variation across couples or families in the absolute amount of housework or child care is ignored. This is critical, because families' overall domestic work loads may vary substantially according to factors such as numbers and ages of children, and the families' standards of domestic labor. Secondly, this sort is of rating system does not provide data on how much family work either the husband or wife performs alone. That is, we can not use the results of studies employing relative measures to describe the actual amount of housework and child care each spouse typically does. For example, Barnett and Baruch (1978) indicated that a wife's employment increases her husband's share of housework and child care, not because his absolute contribution to housework increases, but because his employed wife's contribution to housework decreases. (This assumes in correctly that the total amount of housework to be done is static).

The absolute time-use measures

The absolute time-use measures evaluate division of domestic labor according to the time individuals spend in particular activities (e.g. Bird, Bird, and Scruggs, 1984; Hilton, and Haldeman, 1991) or total household tasks (e.g. Bergen, 1991; Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane, 1992; Kingston and Nock, 1985; Manke et al., 1994; Tang, 1993). Researchers use these kinds of measures in order to



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know how much husbands and wives actually do in absolute terms rather than how husbands and wives divide housework and child care; they conceptualize housework as an economic and productive activity within the family economy. The advantage of these measures is that they yield separate figures for each spouse's family work in absolute terms, and in an easily understood unit of measurement, time. Hence, these measures avoid the problem inherent in the relative measures. And especially, they can get both relative and absolute time spent in housework instead of just relative time.

However, the main shortcoming of these measures is that they

are more expensive and difficult to collect. Several techniques are used in measuring division of housework: reconstruction approach including time periods of one day (e.g. Coverman, 1983; Hilton and Haldeman, 1991) and one week (e.g. Nickols and Metzen, 1982; Bergen, 1991; Presser, 1994); the activity log approach (e.g. Floyd, 1977); and the diary approach (Warner, 1986). However, the common problem of these approaches is that presented by simultaneous activities. For example, the researcher must decide how to divide the time given for washing dishes and doing laundry at the same time. Second, this measurement requires the respondent to expend a great deal of effort remembering to write things down (Warner, 1986). Although absolute time-use measures seem to be more difficult than relative time-use measures, they tend to be more accurate. Thus, researchers should expend effort on overcoming the problems presented by absolute time-use

measure (I will discuss how in the part on a multiple design for division of domestic labor).

Between relative and absolute measures

As I have discussed above, the two kinds of measures (relative and absolute measures) of domestic labor have developed according to different conceptionalizations and have their own approaches for collecting data. However, it is clear that each approach for measuring household division of labor involves tradeoffs. Surveys using the relative distribution approach are the least expensive and require information from only one spouse. However, they may not provide an accurate picture of the division of labor. Time reconstructions and diaries provide hourly estimates that lend themselves nicely to computing averages, but they can be highly inadequate depending on the time period (for reconstructions) or as a result of simultaneous activities and reactivity (for diaries). Refusal rates will be higher for some diary and reconstruction approaches. These techniques are also more expensive and time consuming.

Although relative and absolute measures are based on different concepts of measuring the division of domestic labor, using a method based on direct-time estimates seems to be superior to the use of scale measures (relative measures). First, researchers can transfer direct-time estimates to a relative distribution score that is even more elaborate than the primary relative measure. For example, researchers can transfer the score by using the following equation: the total relative distribution score is equal to the total

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amount of time the wife spends on domestic labor divided by the total amount of both time husband' and wife spend on domestic labor. However, a relative distribution score can never transfer to a direct-time score. Second, scale measures have many limitations in statistical manipulations, whereas continual direct-time scores do not require much space for statistical manipulation (Warner, 1986). Therefore, I will focus on direct-time estimate methods next.

A multiple method design for division of domestic labor

Designing a complete method of division for researching

domestic labor, is difficult due to limitations in time, monetary, and energy budgets. In fact, there is no such thing as a perfect or complete method. Any method design has its limitations and deficiencies. However, a multiple method design can reduce the degree of deficiencies and limitations presented by using a single method design. A multiple method combining observation, interviews, and self-reports is a good design to study the division of domestic labor.

Among independent variables, some variables affecting division of domestic labor are easier to measure by using the method of self-reports, but others are not. For example, to measure the concept of power is not an easy job. Using observational or interview methods to measure marital power is superior to any other, since these methods provide researchers with dynamic processes and static family power structures. However, observational and behavioral measures of family power dynamics

have also been criticized by family power scholars. First, these techniques often take place in laboratory settings and involve trivial tasks that may not give an accurate picture of family decision making about important issues that occur in the home over longer periods of time. Second, the coding of behavioral sequences that is at the core of observational techniques is complex and time-consuming. It may also be unreliable (Szinovacz, 1987). However, most of the problems can be overcome. For example, the observations could involve more natural interactions, such as interactions at home, and they could be longer and less structured, without budget limitations.

In addition, during the interview procedure, researchers could interview participants to understand more detailed negotiations on housework performance. The important thing is that there be both individual and couple interviews. From individual interviews, researchers can learn respondents' individual feelings, thoughts, and other events that respondents may not want to share with their spouses. From couple interviews, they can gain an understanding of a couple's power structure and clarify some family event procedures. For example, when the interviewer asks a couple who decides family economic consumption, the husband may say his wife does. His wife may have a different opinion and give some examples showing that the husband is really the one who decides family economic consumption. From this procedure, the interviewer can obtain more accurate information than would not be possible to get in individual interviews. Also, in an "undesigned" interview in which participants can say anything

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related to their housework, researchers may get some important factors affecting the division of domestic labor. This is especially important, since researchers do not totally understand now what factors affect the division of housework. Finally, respondents could be asked to elaborate on the answers they provide to selfreport instruments, and to discuss their behavior after participating in observational techniques (Shehan and Lee, 1990). Therefore, a design of multiple method design is the better way to measure independent variables in the study of housework allocation.

To accurately measure the dependent variable, domestic labor, is also not easy. Huston and Robins (1982) indicated that in

general, the observational methods involving concurrent recording are superior to those involving delayed recording. The diary record is one of these methods, but it interrupts participants' daily life so much that many people will drop their participation. The diary method is made more accurate by third person observation. However, this observation, especially if continued for a long period, inconveniences participants. In addition, having a third person observer may affect the family's behavior. for example, it may result in the family acting more socially desirable than usual. Therefore, videotaping at home may be a good method by which to reduce both the inconvenience of the third observer's existence and avoid the necessity of personally recording every trivial task. Also, it may reduce the refusal rate and the level of unusually desirable social behavior in housework performance. The most important thing is that it can record the quality of housework performance. For example, the husband may report he takes care of the children

one hour per day when his wife is preparing dinner. In fact, he does not pay much attention to them since he is watching TV at the same time. Or, a husband may say he spends one hour every day cleaning the house. However, during this one hour, he watches football for 40 minutes and only does the cleaning during the football interval time. It is difficult to get an accurate picture in a self-report. Videotaping, on the other hand, can provide a clearer and more detailed framework for understanding division of housework. This is helpful for researchers trying to explain some results of quantitative research.

The time period of videotaping should also be considered in research. Videotape recording will record all tasks and tasks' time performed at home for one week, and the same procedure will be followed twice at different times in order to reduce bias due to the effects of particular time periods such as those of family special events or holidays. For example, during Thanksgiving week, some wives probably spend more time preparing food and cleaning house than in normal daily life since their relatives will come and spend the vacation with the family. Hence, it is necessary to have repeated records in order to avoid the effects of special events. In addition, since most housework is usually performed repetitively in a cycle around one week in length, the seven day recording period may reveal an overall pattern of housework for most people. The seven day period is especially important, since employed and unemployed women usually have different schedules for their housework. For example, married employed women may spend more weekend time doing housework than unemployed women do.

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Therefore, seven days is a good time period for coding the whole pattern of housework. Moreover, from the videotape, coders can also get information about the quality of housework performance which could never be acquired by using the self-report method.

However, the problem with videotaping is that it can capture only overt behavior. Covert and subjective factors, such as education, income, and role ideology, cannot be known from videotape recording. Self-reports are needed to fill the gap, especially when questions are taboo in this society, as with questions of sexual behavior in Taiwan society. Respondents may be willing to fill out questionnaires but may not be willing to answer these questions if asked directly by interviewers. In that case, even an interview is not a proper way to obtain such information. Therefore, a multiple method design, including interviews, self-report, and videotaping should be used in the study of division of domestic labor.

Conclusion

From the past Western studies, three perspectives can explain a small amount of the complexities behind division of housework. Although the studies of housework allocation in Taiwan has become more salient during the past ten years, they still face the same problem of explaining the determinants of housework allocation (such as Lai and Huang, 1995; Li, 1990; Tsung, 1988; Wang, 1987; Yi, 1987). This means there are some other influences researchers have not considered or are not clear on. This

may due to using quantitative method in most of the housework allocation researches in Taiwan. Qualitative research, such as research using by interviews and observations, can help us find these influences, whereas quantitative research cannot. Qualitative research normally looks for patterns of interrelationships between many categories rather than the sharply delineated relationship between a limited set of them (McCracken, 1988). This difference can be characterized as the trade-off between the precision of quantitative methods and the complexity-capturing ability of qualitative ones. The quantitative researcher uses a lens that brings a narrow strip of the field of vision into very precise focus. The

qualitative researcher uses a lens that permits a much less precise vision of a much broader strip.

Research based on the procedure of interview and observation from a broader strip may yield some related variables that may help explain the division of housework. Therefore, considering qualitative methods may provide some interesting perspectives related to division of housework that researchers have not paid attention to before, like in *the Second Shift* by Arlie Hochschild. However, since qualitative methods based on observation can record only overt events, interviews and questionnaires will be included to covert events. Therefore, both will be included in the qualitative research to investigate the related effects on division of housework. Videotape recording will be used to record all tasks and tasks' time and quality of task performance in a natural setting-the home. Also, videotaping can help to reveal the marital power dynamic within the family. From viewing couples' interaction,

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researchers can better understand the process of decision-making and the family power structure. Finally, interviews are mainly designed for the measure of power and the discovering of other related influences on division of housework. From interview and videotape recording, researchers can approach marital power and other related family events from both static and dynamic views. Therefore, a multiple method design is much better than a single method design.

Large samples will be considered to present a population framework in quantitative methods. Self-reports are designed for both spouses to report individual information, such as income,

education, age, occupation, role attitudes, and other related overt and subjective events. These self-reports will include both husband and wife since individual feelings and attitudes can only be reported accurately by the individual him/herself. Therefore, all questions will be asked repetitively of husbands and wives at the same time.

In addition, longitudinal method is also needed in the study of housework allocation. Most past studies have used cross-sectional method to analyze the variables affecting division of housework. However, the problem of using this method is that researchers can hardly come to know the real differentiation in the division of domestic labor between different stages of family life cycle, since the differentiations may be due to the cohort effect. The family life cycle conceptualized by the developmental theory is one of the main variables affecting housework allocation. The family life cycle perspective emphasizes that the division of domestic labor

differs between different stages of a family life cycle since the structures and demands of family members change from stage to stage. The longitudinal method is the best way to see the effects of these changes.

Still, statistical manipulation is one of the most important things demanding a researcher's attention in this field. The most popular statistical method used in studying division of housework is multiple regression. Recently, though, some researchers have argued that the distribution of the dependent variable (the division of domestic labor) with two-group characteristics (husbands do and do not do housework) should not be analyzed via multiple

regression, since multiple regression assumes that the dependent variable is normally distributed. However, the results of an advanced statistical approach, Tobit, do not differ much from the results of multiple regression. In addition, the most important issue is that the regression model does not provide an examination of causal relations between variables. Based on such results, researchers can not indicate the causal effect. Path analysis and the Lisrel model should be considered in the analysis of division of domestic labor. Especially when researchers use some unestimated variables, such as role attitudes and power, the Lisrel model may provide a good method by which to understand causal relationships.



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唐先梅*

中文摘要

本論文主要目的在探討過去家事分工實証研究中,所面對變項操 作定義的問題,並針對這些問題提出一些具體的建議與看法,以為未 來研究參考。

一般實証研究模型中包括自變項及依變項兩部分,而任一部分變 項的測量都可能影響到研究的結果,本論文將針對這兩部分,就過去 家事分工研究中實際的操作情形,分別加以說明及評論。在自變項方 面,最常用來解釋家事分工的理論包括時間可利用論(time availability)、角色理論(role ideology)、及資源論 (resources)等三種,然而由於每位研究者操作這些理論的工具不 同,以致研究結果產生頗大差異。在依變項方面,家事分工的測量也 因研究者採用方式為相對分配法(relative distribution) 或絕對 分配法(absolute time-use) 而影響了研究結果。故本論文除了分 析過去相關研究在變項操作上的缺失外,並在方法上及測量上提出若 干修正,以改進家事分工研究中變項操作的缺失。

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