Division of Family Labor

*How much housework are men and women doing?*
- The most recent estimates suggest that women are spending about 17.5 hours per week on housework and men are spending about 10 hours per week.

*How have patterns in family labor changed?*
- Movement toward equality; that is, the discrepancy between the amount of housework men do and the amount of housework women do has decreased. However, much of this decrease is due to the fact that women spend much less time doing housework now rather than men increasing their load.

*What kind of work are men and women doing?*
- Women spend more time in “core household tasks” (cooking, cleaning, laundry) than men. Men spend more time doing outdoor chores, repairs and maintenance, and yard work.

The fact that women are spending more time than men in labor that benefits the household means that not only do they have more work to do, but they have less time for leisure activities than men. This is known as the “leisure gap.”
Explanations for the Division of Labor

1) Time Constraints

Women’s greater housework time is because they spend less time in the labor market.

2) Sex-role attitudes

The unequal division of labor exists because men and women believe that women should be doing more housework.

3) Relative Resources

Housework is something individuals will try and avoid. Those with more resources can “buy” their way out of housework.

Implications of the division of labor for relationships

Marital quality

Individual Happiness
How Couples Manage Inequality in the Division of Labor

Hochchild’s *The Second Shift* (1989)

Interviewed 50 couples, in-depth observation with 12

- Create “family myths”
- Use of “family fetishes”
“One day, when I asked Nancy to tell me who did which tasks from a long list of household chores, she interrupted me with a broad wave of her hand and said ‘I do the upstairs, Evan does the downstairs.’ What does that mean? I asked. Matter-of-factly, she explained that the upstairs included the living room, the dining room, the kitchen, two bedrooms, and two baths. The downstairs meant the garage, a place for storage and hobbies – Evan’s hobbies. She explained this as a ‘sharing’ arrangement, without humor or irony – just as Evan did later. Both said they had agreed it was the best solution to the dispute. Evan could take care of the car, the garage, and Max, the family dog. As Nancy explained, ‘The dog is all Evan’s problem. I don’t have to deal with the dog.’ Nancy took care of the rest.”
Family Fetishes

“For Evan, also, the dog came to symbolize the entire second shift: it became a fetish. Other men, I found, had second-shift fetishes too. When I asked one man what he did to share the work of the home, he answered ‘I make all the pies we eat.’ He didn’t have to share much responsibility for home; ‘pies’ did it for him. Another man grilled fish. Another baked bread. In their pies, their fish, and their bread, such men converted a single act into a substitute for a multitude of chores in the second shift, a token. Evan took care of the dog.”

The Stalled Revolution

Persistence of inequality in household labor in spite of greater equality in time spent in paid labor.