

2010

## Understanding Workday Housework Participation: Testing Three Theories

Krista Lynn Minnotte  
*University of North Dakota*

Matti Grotte

Follow this and additional works at: <https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/greatplainssociologist>



Part of the [Regional Sociology Commons](#), and the [Rural Sociology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Minnotte, Krista Lynn and Grotte, Matti (2010) "Understanding Workday Housework Participation: Testing Three Theories," *Great Plains Sociologist*: Vol. 21 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/greatplainssociologist/vol21/iss1/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Sociologist by an authorized editor of Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. For more information, please contact [michael.biondo@sdstate.edu](mailto:michael.biondo@sdstate.edu).



# Understanding Workday Housework Participation: Testing Three Theories

Krista Lynn Minnotte\*

Matti Grotte

---

**Abstract** In this study we examine the usefulness of three theories (time availability theory, gender ideology theory, and relative resources) in predicting workday housework performance among partnered and married mothers and fathers. In doing so, we incorporate an extended version of time availability theory that considers the use of flexible scheduling and the presence of nonstandard work hours in addition to number of hours worked. Our hypotheses are addressed with data from a nationally representative sample of employed adults. Our results show that none of the theories are useful in predicting fathers' workday housework performance; however, two theories are beneficial for predicting mothers' performance. Specifically, mothers with more traditional gender ideologies (in support of gender ideology theory) along with mothers who work fewer hours than their partners (in support of time availability theory) perform more workday housework. Additionally, and in support of an extended version of time availability theory, we find the use of flexible scheduling among mothers is associated with higher levels of workday housework performance. Implications of the study are discussed.

---

## INTRODUCTION

The large scale entrance of women into the paid labor force has served to challenge a "traditional" division of labor in which women care for the family domain and men attend to breadwinning (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, and Robinson 2000; Deutsch 1999; Hochschild 1989). Women have succeeded in joining the ranks of men in the workforce, but the concomitant change of men increasing their participation in the family work, including housework, has been slow and uneven (Coltrane 2000; Hochschild 1989). The gender gap evident in the housework performance of husbands and wives creates tension and stress for married and partnered

---

\* Krista Lynn Minnotte, Ph.D., University of North Dakota, Department of Sociology, Gillette Hall Room 202, 225 Centennial Drive Stop 7136, Grand Forks, ND 58202-7136; e-mail: [krista.minnotte@und.edu](mailto:krista.minnotte@und.edu)

women (Hochschild 1989; Milkie, Raley, and Bianchi 2010). Indeed, the unequal division of housework labor is often implicated in conflict between partners and has been linked to reductions in relationship quality (Kluwer, Heesink, and Van de Vliert 1996; Stevens, Kiger, and Riley 2001). Considering that the division of labor becomes increasingly traditional following the transition to parenthood (Baxter, Hewitt, and Haynes 2008; Nomaguchi and Milkie 2003), these tensions may be heightened among partners who have children. For these reasons, understanding the housework participation of married or partnered individuals with children in the home is a particularly worthwhile project.

Scholars have noted that while men's relative housework hours have increased that much of this is explained by women cutting back on their housework time (Press and Townsley 1998). As such, scholars over the past few decades have sought to elucidate mechanisms explaining participation in housework, with research consistently finding that gender remains one the most important predictors of this variable (Coltrane 2000; Shelton and John 1996). As scholars have sought to explain the gendered division of household labor, three key theories have been the most influential: relative resources theory, time availability theory, and gender ideology theory. This paper examines how well each of these three theories explains housework participation, while also extending time availability theory to include other workplace factors that may serve to expand or contract the time available to do housework. In particular, we consider the role of nonstandard work hours and the use of flexible scheduling (Noonan, Estes, and Glass 2007; Presser, 1994; 2003). We devote our attention to housework performed on work days—days that are likely to be the most stressful and difficult to manage, especially among households with dependent children. We contribute to the understanding of the gendered division of household labor by focusing on *workday* housework, which is largely unexplored in the literature, along with our incorporation of an expanded version of time

availability theory. To address our research questions we use data from a nationally representative sample of employed adults in the United States, with our attention restricted to those who are married or partnered with children under the age of 18 living in the home. Analyses are conducted separately by gender to explore gendered processes that may come into play in explaining workday housework participation.

### *Predicting Housework Performance*

As mentioned earlier, three primary theories have been used by scholars to explain participation in housework: relative resources theory, gender ideology theory, and time availability theory. In this section of the paper, we review key literature pertaining to each of the theories, and then propose the hypotheses that will guide our analyses.

*Relative Resources.* According to relative resources theory, individuals use their resources, typically in the form of earnings, to bargain for reduced housework performance (Coverman 1989; Shelton and John 1996). Operating from the assumption that housework is unpleasant, individuals are viewed as using income to buy their way out of this form of labor. Along these lines, in married or partnered relationships housework performance is tied to earnings, with those who earn higher incomes performing less housework. Hence, as women's earnings increase relative to their partners, their partner's housework contributions should increase; and when women's earnings are low compared to their partners, women's housework contributions will remain high. Studies that have examined the linear relationship between relative income and housework have found that men tend to perform more housework when their wives make greater contributions to household income (Bianchi et al. 2000; Ross 1987). Here we consider whether the proportion of household income contributed by the respondent (compared to his or her partner or spouse) is related to the respondent's housework

performance. We propose the following hypothesis based on the central argument of relative resources theory:

Hypothesis 1: Proportional income will be negatively related to workday housework performance.

*Gender Ideology.* Scholars have also proposed that individuals' beliefs and attitudes regarding gender are central to the division of household labor, with gender ideologies playing an especially important role (Hochschild 1989). Gender ideology is defined as "how a person identifies herself or himself with regard to marital and family roles that are traditionally linked to gender" (Greenstein 1996:586). Gender ideology theory suggests that women who hold traditional gender ideologies will regard the home as their province, and hence will perform more housework than egalitarian women who are oriented to both work and home; whereas men who are more traditional will perform less housework than more egalitarian men because traditional men will view housework as "women's work" (Coverman 1989; Fuwa 2004; Shelton and John 1996).

We argue that gender ideologies may be especially important in predicting workday housework performance, as traditional women may feel pressure to perform housework on such days to ensure they are behaving in accordance with their gender ideologies despite their paid labor force participation. Egalitarian women, on the other hand, may feel no such need to demonstrate their dedication to traditional beliefs by performing housework on work days. Previous scholarship has demonstrated that men with more egalitarian gender ideologies tend to perform more housework than more traditional men, and women with more egalitarian gender ideologies spend less time performing housework than more traditional women, even when employment and parental status are controlled for (Bianchi et al. 2000; Fuwa 2004;

Gazco-Windle and McMullin 2003; Presser 1994; Ross 1987). Gender ideology theory leads us to propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: Mothers with more traditional gender ideologies will perform more housework on workdays than more egalitarian mothers.

Hypothesis 3: Fathers with more traditional gender ideologies will perform less housework on workdays than more egalitarian fathers.

*Time Availability.* Time availability theory contends that among partnered individuals that whichever partner has fewer time commitments will perform more housework, with time commitments typically determined by considering labor force hours (Coverman 1989; Shelton and John 1996). As such, individuals who work more hours compared to their partners should perform less housework and those individuals who work fewer hours than their partners should perform more housework. Two reviews of the housework literature have concluded that work hours are negatively related to the housework performance of both men and women (Coltrane 2000; Shelton and John 1996).

A few scholars have expanded time availability to consider the use of flexible scheduling in predicting housework, as the use of flexible scheduling may lead to individuals adjusting their work schedules to meet their family needs (Noonan et al. 2007; Silver and Goldscheider 1994; Wharton 1994). Indeed, findings from previous studies indicate that some women deliberately choose to work in jobs characterized by flexibility in the scheduling of hours in the hopes of being more available to take care of needs emerging from the family domain, such as housework (Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, and Andrey 2008; Wharton 1994).

Although a relationship between the use of flexible scheduling and enhanced housework performance is often assumed to exist, very little research has examined the relationship between these two variables, with existing research tending to focus on only women (e.g.,

Silver and Goldscheider; Wharton 1994). For instance, Silver and Goldscheider (1994) in their examination of the availability of flexible fringe benefits and women's housework performance found that these benefits were associated with increased housework performance among mature women but not among younger women. A potential limitation of their research is its focus on the availability of policies, as we know from previous scholarship that the provision of flexible scheduling benefits does not necessarily result in their use due to fear of career repercussions (Blair-Loy and Wharton 2002; Secret 2000). Hence, we cannot know if the women in Silver and Goldscheider's study actually used the flexible fringe benefits that were available to them, and presumably it is the use of the policies that allows workers to expand their time to attend to family needs. This means that it is especially important to examine how the actual use of such policies is related to housework performance, and only a few studies have done so. One such study using a Midwestern sample of employed parents found that wives who use flexible scheduling, in contradiction to their predictions, actually performed less housework (Noonan et al. 2007). Despite this contradictory finding, we expect flexible scheduling to be associated with higher levels of workday housework performance because it allows workers the ability to arrange their work hours so as to better take care of family-related needs, including housework on the days when they are working (Wharton 1994).

Nonstandard work hours are another mechanism that may serve to expand the time an individual has available to perform housework on days when they are working. Presser (1994; 2003) has been at the forefront of calling attention to both the increasing prevalence of nonstandard work hours in our 24/7 economy and the ramifications of this important change for a variety of marital and family outcomes, including the division of domestic labor. Presser's (2003) work demonstrated that among couples with children that wives spend more time on female-typed household tasks when they work nonstandard shifts, and at least one study has

found that shift work is associated with a general increase in the housework participation of women (Silver and Goldscheider 1994). Moreover, Presser's research (1994; 2003) indicated that when husbands and wives work different schedules (usually due to one partner working a nonstandard schedule) that this tends to enhance men's housework participation. In the present study, we are unable to consider the role of the spouse's schedule, but we do examine whether there is a relationship between the nonstandard work hours of the respondent and the respondent's workday housework performance. We argue that nonstandard hours are likely to enhance housework performance because a respondent who works nonstandard hours most likely works a different shift than his or her partner, which leaves the respondent primarily responsible for household tasks that arise when he or she is not at work. Regarding the extended version of time availability theory, we put forth the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: Relative work hours will be negatively related to workday housework performance.

Hypothesis 5: The use of flexible scheduling will be positively related to workday housework performance.

Hypothesis 6: Nonstandard work schedules will be positively related to workday housework performance.

*Demographic Control Variables.* We also take into account a number of demographic control variables in our analyses, including age, race, education, and the presence of children under the age of 6 in the household. Age is important to consider, as previous research indicates that housework performance may differ among younger versus older respondents (e.g., Silver and Goldscheider 1994). For instance, Bianchi and colleagues (2000) found that age was negatively related to the housework performance of husbands. Previous research has also indicated that the division of household labor may be more traditional among certain ethnic

groups, such as Hispanics (Sayer and Fine 2010), whereas it tends to be egalitarian among other groups, such as African-Americans (John and Shelton 1997), leading us to include race in our analyses. Studies have shown that children, especially the presence of children under the age of 6, are related to increased housework performance among men and women and to a larger gender gap in housework performance (e.g., Bianchi et al. 2000; Perkins and DeMeis 1996). For that reason, we include the presence of children under age 6 as one of the variables in our study.

## METHOD

To address our proposed hypotheses we use data from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW). A questionnaire regarding work and family life was developed by The Families and Work Institute (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, and Prottas 2003), which was then used by Harris Interactive to collect the data. The data is a nationally representative sample of employed adults who were interviewed during an eight month time period. The sample was generated using random-digit dialing, with interviewers determining eligibility at the time of the telephone call. To be eligible for participation an individual had to be at least 18 years of age and employed in the paid labor force. After eligibility was determined, a computer-assisted telephone interviewing system was utilized to obtain the data with the interviews lasting approximately 45 minutes. The resulting dataset for the 2002 NSCW contained 2,810 employees, including 1,640 women and 1,170 men. For the purposes of this study, analysis was restricted to those respondents who were married or partnered, whose spouse or partner was employed in the paid labor force, who reported having at least one child under the age of 18 living in their home, and who were not missing data on any of the study variables ( $N = 613$ ). Please note that although our data contain some measures regarding the

spouse or partner of the respondent that we do *not* have couple data; the mothers and fathers in the sample are *not* married or partnered to each other.

### *Measures*

*Dependent variable.* *Workday housework performance* was measured by asking the respondents "on average, on days when you're working, about how much time do YOU spend on home chores -- things like cooking, cleaning, repairs, shopping, yardwork, and keeping track of money and bills?" Respondents gave their answers either in minutes or hours, and for the purposes of this analysis all responses were converted to hours.

*Independent variables.* The variable *relative work hours* was created by taking the respondent's report of how many hours he or she worked on average per week at all jobs and subtracting the respondent's report of his or her partner's average work hours per week at all jobs. Positive scores on the variable indicate that the respondent reports working more hours than his or her partner, negative scores indicate the partner works more hours than the respondent (according to the respondent), and a score of zero indicates that the respondent works the same number of hours as the partner (according to the respondent). *Use of flexible scheduling* was measured by one item that asked respondents the extent to which they used flexible scheduling options that were available at their place of work. Responses ranged from "a lot" (coded as a 1) to "not at all" (coded as a 4). The scores were then reverse coded such that higher scores reflect greater use of available flexible scheduling. Additionally, respondents who reported that their workplace did not have flexible scheduling options available were assigned a code of 0 on this variable. Hence, the final range of scores for this variable is from 0 = no flexible scheduling available to 4 = uses a lot. To measure *nonstandard work hours* respondents were asked to characterize the schedule they worked at their main job. Response categories that respondents could select from included a regular daytime shift, a regular

evening shift, a regular night shift, a rotating shift, a split shift, a variable schedule with no set hours, or some other schedule. Respondents who indicated working a regular daytime shift were coded 0 on nonstandard work hours and all other respondents were coded 1 (indicating they worked a nonstandard work schedule).

*Gender ideology* was measured by asking respondents to indicate their extent of agreement with the following statement: "it is much better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children?" Available response categories ranged from 1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree. The responses were reverse coded such that higher scores are indicative of more traditional gender ideologies. To examine the effects of differential income we included a measure of *proportion of income* that indicates the proportion of the total household income that was contributed by the respondent (respondent's income divided by the respondent's income plus the partner's income).

*Demographic control variables.* *Age* was measured in years. *Race* was entered as a series of dummy variables (African-American, Hispanic, and other race) with White used as the reference group. *Education* was also a series of dummy variables (less than high school, some college, college graduate, and postgraduate degree) with high school education serving as the comparison group. Lastly, the *presence of children* under 6 was a dummy variable that was coded 1 for the presence of such children in the household and 0 if no such children were present.

*Analytic Strategy.* To address our hypotheses separate Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression equations were estimated for fathers and mothers in order to address gendered processes that may come into play. Each OLS regression equation contains the demographic control variables (age, race, education, and presence of children under 6) along with the

independent variables (relative work hours, use of flexible scheduling, nonstandard work hours, gender ideology and proportion of income) in predicting workday housework performance.

## RESULTS

The descriptive statistics for the study variables are displayed in Table 1, along with the results of *t* tests pertaining to all non-dummy variables. It is noteworthy that there is a statistically significant difference between the means of mothers ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = 2.16$ ) and fathers ( $M = 1.94$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ) on workday housework performance, with mothers performing significantly more workday housework than fathers. Among fathers we find that roughly 12% self-report as Hispanic, 10% self-report as Black, 74% self-report as White, and 5% self-report as some other race. For mothers we find that approximately 12% self-report as Hispanic, 7% self-report as Black, 78% self-report as White, and 3% self-report as some other race. Among mothers we find that roughly 8% have less than a high school education, 28% have a high school diploma, 31% have some college, 24% have a four year college degree, and 8% have a postgraduate degree as their highest level of education. Among fathers we find that approximately 15% have less than a high school education, 30% have a high school diploma, 26% have some college, 20% have a four year college degree, and 10% have a postgraduate degree as their highest level of educational attainment. On average, the fathers are significantly older ( $M = 39.58$ ,  $SD = 8.39$ ) than the mothers ( $M = 38.45$ ,  $SD = 8.74$ ) in our sample. Roughly 47% of the fathers and 38% of the mothers report the presence of at least one child under the age of 6 within the home. Mothers and fathers report fairly similar gender ideologies ( $M = 2.44$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ,  $M = 2.36$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ , respectively), and similar levels of working a nonstandard work schedule (29% of fathers and 26% of mothers). On average, mothers, who contribute about 40% of their household income, also earn significantly less than their spouses or partners (measured proportionately) compared to the fathers, who contribute

about 67% of their household income. Mothers, on average, also work significantly fewer hours than their spouses or partners compared to fathers. Mothers average approximately 9.89 hours less work hours per week ( $SD = 18.76$ ) than their partners or spouses, compared fathers who on average work about 12.77 hours more per week ( $SD = 18.13$ ) than their partners or spouses. Mothers, on average, are also significantly more likely to use flexible scheduling ( $M = 2.20$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ) than the fathers in the sample ( $M = 1.90$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ).

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics (N = 308 fathers and 305 mothers)

Variables	Fathers		Mothers	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	39.58*	8.39	38.45*	8.74
Hispanic	.12	.32	.12	.33
African American	.10	.30	.07	.38
White	.77	.42	.82	.38
Other race	.05	.21	.03	.17
Less than high school	.15	.35	.08	.27
High school	.30	.46	.28	.45
Some college	.26	.44	.31	.46
College degree	.20	.40	.24	.43
Postgraduate degree	.09	.29	.08	.27
Presence of children under 6	.47	.50	.38	.49
Gender ideology	2.44	1.10	2.36	1.13
Proportion of income	.67*	.19	.40*	.19
Relative work hours	12.77*	18.13	-9.89*	18.76
Use of flexible scheduling	1.90*	1.29	2.20*	1.32
Nonstandard work hours	.29	.45	.26	.44
Workday housework performance	1.94*	1.50	3.11*	2.16

\*Indicates a *t* test of the difference between the means was significant at the .05 level or higher. Note that *t* tests were not performed on the dummy variables. <sup>a</sup>The comparison group is Whites. <sup>b</sup>High school degree is the reference category. <sup>c</sup>Higher scores indicate a more traditional gender ideology. <sup>d</sup>The higher the score, the greater the proportion of income contributed by the respondent. <sup>e</sup>The higher the score, the more hours the respondent works relative to his or her partner.

The results of the OLS regression models are shown in Table 2. First, we note that the OLS regression model fails to achieve statistical significance for the fathers, and none of the

variables are significant in predicting fathers' workday housework performance. That is, neither relative resources theory, gender ideology theory, nor time availability theory are predictive of men's workday housework. Next, we briefly describe the findings pertaining to the control variables for mothers. The results indicate that Hispanic mothers report performing significantly more workday housework than White mothers do. In terms of education, mothers with less than high school education and mothers with college degrees report significantly higher levels of workday housework than mothers with high school degrees.

Next, we address whether or not the findings support the hypotheses for mothers. Hypothesis 1 states that proportional income will be negatively related to workday housework performance, and the results fail to support this hypothesis for mothers. Hypothesis 2 concerning the relationship between mothers' gender ideologies and mothers' workday housework performance is supported. The results indicate that more traditional gender ideologies are positively related to workday housework performance. Hypothesis 3 regarding fathers' gender ideologies is not supported. Hypothesis 4 predicts that relative work hours will be negatively related to workday housework performance, and this hypothesis is supported for mothers. The findings show that the more hours a mother works relative to her partner or spouse the less workday housework she reports performing. Hypothesis 5 concerning the use of flexible scheduling is supported for mothers, as higher scores on the use of flexible scheduling are associated with greater levels of workday housework. The last hypothesis regarding nonstandard work hours is not supported for mothers.

Table 2 Summary of Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Workday Housework Performance (N = 308 men and 305 women)

Variables	Fathers		Mothers			$\beta$
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	
<i>Control variables</i>						
Age	-.01	.02	-.05	-.004	.02	-.01
Hispanic <sup>a</sup>	-.30	.32	-.06	.89	.44	.12*
African American <sup>a</sup>	-.04	.38	.08	-.15	.47	-.02
Other race <sup>a</sup>	-.04	.38	-.01	.18	.61	.02
Less than high school <sup>b</sup>	-.16	.41	-.03	-1.03	.50	-.13*
Some college <sup>b</sup>	-.13	.23	-.04	-.35	.34	-.07
College degree <sup>b</sup>	-.38	.26	-.11	-.71	.34	-.15*
Postgraduate degree <sup>b</sup>	-.39	.34	-.08	-.79	.48	-.11
Presence of children under 6	.25	.23	.08	-.53	.30	-.12
<i>Independent variables</i>						
Gender ideology <sup>c</sup>	.10	.09	.08	.23	.12	.12*
Proportion of income <sup>d</sup>	-.41	.57	-.05	-.22	.77	-.02
Relative work hours <sup>e</sup>	-.002	.01	-.02	-.02	.01	-.17**
Use of flexible scheduling	-.02	.07	-.01	.28	.10	.17**
Nonstandard work hours	-.10	.21	-.03	.44	.30	.09
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>	-.002 <sup>f</sup>		.09			

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ . <sup>a</sup>The comparison group is Whites. <sup>b</sup>High school degree is the reference category. <sup>c</sup>Higher scores indicate a more traditional gender ideology. <sup>d</sup>The higher the score, the greater the proportion of income contributed by the respondent. <sup>e</sup>The higher the score, the more hours the respondent works relative to his or her partner. <sup>f</sup>Note that the OLS regression model is not significant for men.

## DISCUSSION

The present study sought to examine the utility of three traditional housework theories (relative resources, gender ideology, and time availability) in predicting workday housework hours among partnered mothers and fathers using data from a nationally representative sample of working adults. We narrowed our examination to consider the mechanisms predicting workday housework performance among married or partnered workers with at least one child under age 18 living in the home. In particular, we followed other scholars in extending the time availability perspective to consider not only relative hours worked, but also the use of flexible scheduling (Noonan et al. 2007; Silver and Goldscheider 1994; Wharton 1994) and nonstandard work hours (Presser 1994; 2003). We focused on the performance of housework on workdays because we view these housework hours as especially burdensome, and hence they may be more likely to cause stress and conflict among working parents who are married or partnered. It may also be the case that increasing men's contributions to workday housework is especially difficult.

The results from the present study suggest that important gendered processes may be at play in the performance of workday housework hours. Indeed, our study suggests that *none* of the traditional theories are useful in predicting fathers' performance of workday housework hours. Not only are none of the variables significant in predicting such fathers' workday housework hours, but the model itself is not significant—suggesting that these variables, taken together, play little, if any, role in shaping fathers' workday housework hours. The existing scholarship has tended to predict men's housework in general rather than men's housework on workdays, which may help explain why little variation in fathers' housework is explained by our study (e.g., Baxter et al. 2008; Bianchi et al. 2000; Gazso-Windle and McMullin 2003; John and Shelton 1997; Presser 1994). Future research would benefit from identifying factors that do

make a difference in predicting the workday housework performance of partnered men with dependent children. For example, in keeping with an extended time availability perspective, scholars could consider the role of work-to-family conflict in predicting workday housework performance. In contrast to the lack of significant predictors of housework for fathers, among mothers support is found for the extended time availability theory and gender ideology theory, suggesting these theories are salient for explaining variation in mothers' workday housework performance.

In terms of the extended time availability theory, we find that partnered mothers' use of flexible scheduling is associated with increased workday housework performance. In this way, it does appear that flexible scheduling policies enhance working mothers' ability to attend to family needs, such as the performance of household chores, on workdays. However, we find no evidence of such a relationship for working partnered fathers, which is in accordance with the findings from a study conducted by Noonan and colleagues (2007). Together these findings suggest that workplace flexibility, while it may be beneficial for fathers in other ways, does not appear to enhance their performance of household chores on days that they are working. We encourage future research to consider whether the use of flexible scheduling is predictive of other forms of family work, such as emotion-work performance (Minnotte, Stevens, Minnotte, and Kiger 2007; Minnotte, Pedersen, Mannon, and Kiger 2010) or child care.

Our findings differ from those of Noonan and colleagues (2007), in that they found a negative relationship between use of flexible scheduling among mothers and their housework performance, whereas we found a positive relationship. We believe a potential explanation for the contradictory nature of our finding is that their study focused on a Midwestern sample, while our study considered a nationally representative sample of employed fathers and mothers. It could be that the predictors of housework performance are potentially shaped by

regional differences. Moreover, given that their study focused on households with children around age 7 the results may be also more salient to families with young children. Regardless, the results from our study suggest that the use of flexible scheduling may expand the time mothers have available to perform housework on workdays.

Our study finds tentative support for gender ideology theory in predicting mothers' workday housework performance, with mothers adhering to more traditional gender ideologies reporting greater performance. We find no evidence of gender ideology shaping the workday housework performance of working fathers. We think part of the reason we failed to find a relationship is that we were unable to take into account the gender ideology of the fathers' partners. Indeed, previous research suggests that partners' gender ideologies work in concert to affect the domestic labor performance of men, with egalitarian men married to egalitarian women being especially likely to have high levels of housework performance (Greenstein 1996).

The present study is characterized by four primary limitations that should be taken into consideration. First, although we were able to examine the role of two key partner characteristics (income and work hours), a full examination of how the dynamics of the couple come into play in shaping the division of domestic labor is not possible with the present data. In order to fully address the couple-level characteristics that undoubtedly shape the negotiation of housework on workdays data from couples is essential. For instance, the present study failed to find a significant relationship between nonstandard hours and workday housework performance, which might be explained by our inability to directly take into account the partner's work schedule. We assume that most of the time if the respondent works a nonstandard shift that his or her partner probably works a standard shift, especially since the strategy of rotating shifts is sometimes undertaken by couples to avoid non-family childcare or to save money on childcare (Deutsch 1999). We also know from previous research (e.g.,

Presser 1994) that when husbands work hours that differ from those of their spouse this tends to increase the amount of housework performed by such husbands. Hence, our failure to find such a relationship may stem from our inability to take the partner's work schedule into account.

A second limitation of our study concerns the measurement of variables concerning the respondent's partner or spouse. Even though we do include some couple level mechanisms in the present study (relative work hours and proportion of income), we should be mindful that all data regarding the respondent's spouse were gathered from the respondent, and may not accurately represent either the partner's true work hours or the partner's actual income. Third, the use of a one-item measure of gender ideology is not ideal, especially since people's gender ideologies are often complex and dynamic. However, we note that this one item has traditionally been used in many indexes of gender ideology (Davis and Greenstein 2009). Lastly, we must be mindful that our operationalization of housework, like other telephone survey measures of housework, is generally not considered as reliable as other measures, such as time diaries or interviews conducted in person (Bryant, Kang, Zick, and Chan 2004). Hence, telephone surveys, such as the one used by the present study, may lead to overestimations of time spent on housework (Press and Townsley 1998). For these reasons, we must remain cautious in the interpretation of the results of the present study.

In conclusion, we have addressed the relative utility of three theories in predicting the workday housework performance of partnered mothers and fathers with children under the age of 18 living in the home. Our results point to the salience of the use of flexible scheduling in predicting mothers' workday housework performance, with such use associated with increased housework among the partnered mothers of dependent children in our sample. No such relationship was found among the men in the sample. Altogether, our results suggest that

future research consider expanded versions of time availability theory rather than just examining the sheer number of hours worked. Additionally, our work points to the importance of considering dyadic level mechanisms in predicting workday housework performance among partnered and married parents. We trust that future research will continue to elucidate the mechanisms surrounding the gendered division of household labor.

REFERENCES

- Baxter, Janeen, Belinda Hewitt, and Michele Haynes. 2008. "Life Course Transitions and Housework: Marriage, Parenthood, and Time on Housework." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 70:259-272.
- Bianchi, Suzanne M., Melissa A. Milkie, Liana C. Sayer, and John P. Robinson. 2000. "Is Anyone Doing the Housework? Trends in the Gender Division of Household Labor." *Social Forces* 79:191-229.
- Blair-Loy, Mary and Amy S. Wharton. 2002. "Employees' Use of Work-Family Policies and the Workplace Social Context." *Social Forces* 80:813-845.
- Bond, James T., Cindy Thompson, Ellen Galinsky, and David Prottas. 2003. *The 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce*. New York: Families and Work Institute.
- Bryant, W. Keith, Hyojin Kang, Cathleen D. Zick, and Anna Y. Chan. 2004. "Measuring Housework in Time Use Surveys." *Review of Economics of the Household* 2:23-47.
- Coltrane, Scott. 2000. "Research on Household Labor: Modeling and Measuring the Social Embeddedness of Routine Family Work." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62:1208-1233.
- Coverman, Shelley. 1989. "Women's Work is Never Done: The Division of Domestic Labor. Pp. 356-367 in *Women: A Feminist Perspective*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., edited by J. Freeman. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co.
- Davis, Shannon N. and Theodore N. Greenstein. 2009. "Gender Ideology: Components, Predictors, and Consequences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 35:87-105.
- Deutsch, Francine M. 1999. *Halving It All: How Equally Shared Parenting Works*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Fuwa, Makiko. 2004. "Macro-Level Gender Inequality and the Division of Household Labor in 22 countries." *American Sociological Review* 69: 751-767.
- Gazso-Windle, Amber and Julie Ann McMullin. 2003. "Doing Domestic Labour: Strategising in a Gendered Domain." *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 28:341-366.
- Greenstein, Theodore N. 1996. "Husbands' Participation in Domestic Labor: Interactive Effects of Wives' and Husbands' Gender Ideologies." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58:585-595.
- Hersch, Joni and Leslie S. Stratton. 1994. "Housework, Wages, and the Division of Housework Time for Employed Spouses." *American Economic Review* 84:120-125.
- Hilbrecht, Margo, Susan M. Shaw, Laura C. Johnson, and Jean Andrey. 2008. "'I'm Home for the Kids': Contradictory Implications for Work-Life Balance among Teleworking Mothers." *Gender, Work, and Organization* 15:454-476.
- Hochschild, Arlie R., with Machung, A. 1989. *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*. New York: Viking Press.
- John, Daphne and Beth Anne Shelton. 1997. "The Production of Gender among Black and White Women and Men: The Case of Household Labor." *Sex Roles* 36:171-193.
- Kluwer, Ester S., José A.M. Heesink, and Evert Van de Vliert. 1996. "Marital Conflict About the Division of Household Labor and Paid Work." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 58:958-969.
- Milkie, Melissa A., Sara B. Raley, and Suzanne M. Bianchi. 2009. "Taking on the Second Shift: Time Allocations and Time Pressures of U.S. Parents with Preschoolers." *Social Forces* 88:487-518.
- Minnotte, Krista Lynn, Daphne E. Pedersen, Susan E. Mannon, and Gary Kiger. 2010.

- "Tending to the Emotions of Children: Predicting Parental Performance of Emotion Work with Children." *Marriage & Family Review* 46:224-241.
- Minnotte, Krista Lynn, Daphne Pedersen Stevens, Michael C. Minnotte, and Gary Kiger. 2007. "Emotion-Work Performance among Dual-Earner Couples: Testing Four Theoretical Perspectives." *Journal of Family Issues* 28:773-793.
- Nomaguchi, Kei M. and Melissa Milkie. 2003. "Costs and Rewards of Children: The Effects of Becoming a Parent on Adults' Lives." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65:356-374.
- Noonan, Mary C., Sarah Beth Estes, and Jennifer L. Glass. 2007. "Do Workplace Flexibility Policies Influence Time Spent in Domestic Labor?" *Journal of Family Issues* 28:263-288.
- Perkins, H. Wesley and Debra K. DeMeis. 1996. "Gender and Family Effects on the Second-Shift Domestic Activity of College-Educated Young Adults." *Gender & Society* 10:78-93.
- Press, Julie E. and Eleanor Townsley. 1998. "Wives' and Husbands' Housework Reporting: Gender, Class, and Social Desirability." *Gender and Society* 12:188-218.
- Presser, Harriet B. 1994. "Employment Schedules among Dual-Earner Spouses and the Division of Household Labor by Gender." *American Sociological Review* 59:348-364.
- Presser, Harriet B. 2003. *Working in a 24/7 Economy: Challenges for American Families*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Ross, Catherine E. 1987. "The Division of Labor at Home." *Social Forces* 65:816-833.
- Sayer, Liana C. and Leah Fine. Forthcoming. "Racial-Ethnic Differences in U.S.

Married Women's and Men's Housework." *Social Indicators Research*.

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/wu2605783451p588/> downloaded

November 12, 2010.

Secret, Mary. 2000. "Identifying the Family, Job, and Workplace Characteristics of Employees Who Use Work-Family Benefits." *Family Relations* 49:217-225.

Shelton, Beth Anne and Daphne John. 1996. "The Division of Household Labor." *Annual Review of Sociology* 22:299-322.

Silver, Hilary and Frances Goldscheider. 1994. "Flexible Work and Housework: Work and Family Constraints on Women's Domestic Labor." *Social Forces* 72:1103-1119.

Stevens, Daphne, Gary Kiger, and Pamela J. Riley. 2001. "Working Hard and Hardly Working: Domestic Labor and Marital Satisfaction among Dual-Earner Couples." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63:514-526.

Wharton, Carol S. 1994. "Finding Time for the Second Shift: The Impact of Flexible Work Schedules on Women's Double Days." *Gender & Society* 8:189-205.