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The Division of Labor in Dutch Families with Preschool Children

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We analyze the actual and the preferred division of family tasks in a group of Dutch families with preschool children. Furthermore, we have tried to give a general description of the activity pattern when both spouses are at home. The results show a noticeable trend towards egalitarianism, particularly in the higher socioeconomic strata; however, this egalitarianism appears not so much a fact as an ideal to be pursued. Moreover, even in the "ideal" situation, the traditional male/female task division remains to some extent. However, both in actual and preferred task division, as well as in the general activity pattern, families with employed wives show a shift towards more equality; but even (part-time) employed wives are reluctant to leave specifically domestic tasks to their husbands. Finally, it appears that when both spouses are at home the father plays more with the children and, thus, fulfills a clearly recreational and creative role within family life.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper we analyze the parental division of family tasks in Dutch families with young children. We concentrate on the division of household tasks, of child care, and of "pedagogical" activities. The data relevant to this subject were gathered as part of a larger investigation into the development and quality of attachment between parents and their young children (cf. Tavecchio and Van IJzendoorn, 1982; Van IJzendoorn et al., 1983). Until recently, child care was seen as the primary responsibility of the mother and perceived as an inappropriate activity for men. The same holds for the greater part of domestic tasks within the family. On the other hand, 10 years ago Safilios-Rothschild (1972) argued that the dividing lines between sex-related roles and activities

were beginning to fade, which points to a developing egalitarian tendency in modern family life. In a study of 1,119 Dutch women aged 18-65, Kooy (1979) also found indications of a turning of the tide in the direction of a more egalitarian division of responsibilities between the sexes. It appeared that younger generations of women are beginning to reject the idea of being fated (by nature or by society) to play a traditionally defined female role. At the same time, however, Kooy's findings reflected the rather persistent nature of the conventional sex-related division of roles: in spite of all changing views, the women in his survey kept performing the "lion's share" of household tasks, even if they worked outside the home. Moore and Sawhill (1976) noted that employed wives exercise more power and influence within their marriages than full-time housewives. Although in the present study only a small minority of the wives (17%) worked outside the home, we pay some attention to the impact of the wife's employment on the husband's participation in family tasks.

Socioeconomic status (SES) could be a variable of some relevance. In a study of 700 Dutch women, Meijnen (1977) found that as SES rose, the *desirability of a role division between the sexes*

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decreased. Therefore, possible effects of SES on the views of husbands and wives concerning the division of family tasks also are examined. Many studies in this area, including the above-mentioned studies of Kooy and Meijnen, have relied on the report of a single family member, often the wife. A number of studies, however, including Safilios-Rothschild (1969), Granbois and Willett (1970), Larson (1974), and Albrecht et al. (1979), found differences in reports of husbands and wives when data were collected from each separately. In the present study we offer a perspective on the division of labor at home by analyzing the views of both partners with respect to some aspects of family work and the respective roles that both *actually* play and should *preferably* play in the division of family tasks. We concentrate on a number of concrete, regularly performed family tasks, e.g., vacuuming, bottle-feeding the baby, fixing broken toys. We think that our choice of married couples with at least two children of preschool age is a relevant one, since this is a period of particular stress in the family cycle. In the second part of this paper we focus on the activity pattern of husbands and wives *when both are at home*, i.e., between 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. on weekdays, and on Sundays.

METHODS

Sampling

The investigation started with a group of 237 families in Leiden that met the requirements of being a married couple with at least two children between the age of 0 and 3.5 years. In the data collection phase (late 1979), these 237 families formed the *entire population* of families in Leiden with the desired characteristics. After four efforts at recruitment, 183 families (over 77%) proved willing to participate in the study. An analysis of the influence of nonresponse on a number of important variables gave no reason to assume that the nonrespondents formed a systematically de-

viant subgroup within the population (cf. Van IJzendoorn et al., 1980:93-99). The following analyses of the data, however, relate to 166 families. Seventeen families with twins were studied separately (Jansen, 1980).

With respect to the composition of the 166 families investigated, most had two children (84.9%), 9.6% had three children, the rest four or more. The age of the youngest child averaged 8.7 months (minimum 1 month, maximum 24 months; $SD = 4.6$), that of the next to youngest child 29.8 months (minimum 16, maximum 46 months; $SD = 5.0$). The mothers' ages averaged 29 years (minimum 19, maximum 47; $SD = 3.9$), the fathers 31 years (minimum 22, maximum 47; $SD = 3.6$).

The socioeconomic status of the families was computed according to the so-called "Bernstein method," which is based on the educational and professional level of both the husband and the wife (Bernstein and Brandis, 1970). In Table 1 the SES distributions of the families investigated and of the whole group are listed. In the present study it is generally noticeable that the higher socioeconomic groups are overrepresented in both the original group and the group ultimately investigated—cause for caution with respect to the generalizability of the results.

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire sent by mail to each family in the population. Since parents received the questionnaires at the same time, they possibly might have influenced one another when completing them. In an accompanying letter, therefore, it was strongly emphasized that it was necessary to fill in the questionnaires individually and independently. In addition, we ran across some systematic discrepancies in the answers of the two parents to questions concerning motives for parenthood, goals in rearing, etc. (cf. Van IJzendoorn and Tavecchio, 1982). Such discrepancies would not necessarily be expected if the questionnaires had not been filled in independently of one another.

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTIONS OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS (SES) IN THE ORIGINAL GROUP ($N = 237$) AND THE GROUP OF FAMILIES ULTIMATELY INVESTIGATED ($N = 166$)

Level	Original Group		Group Investigated	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
1. Unskilled worker	3	1.3	1	.6
2. Skilled worker	26	11.0	11	6.6
3. Lower level employees	39	16.4	26	15.7
4. Middle level employees	40	16.9	31	18.7
5. Higher level employees	41	17.3	33	19.9
6. Academic level	63	26.6	52	31.3
7. Missing/unknown	25	10.5	12	7.2
Total	237	100.0	166	100.0

Concerning the division of family tasks, both partners were asked independently to indicate on a 5-point scale how activities in household, child care, and "pedagogical" areas were divided between husband and wife. The 15 items, which by and large represent activities that in the traditional view of parental roles are considered either "typically male" or "typically female" were as follows: (a) making the beds, (b) taking the children to the bathroom, (c) cuddling the children, (d) fixing broken toys, (e) diapering the baby, (f) attending to the child when she/he cries at night, (g) fixing a flat (bicycle) tire, (h) vacuuming, (i) tussling with the children, (j) bringing the children to bed, (k) punishing the children, (l) driving the car, (m) reading to the children, (n) bottle-feeding the baby, (o) changing a fuse. The 5-point scale used contained the following categories: (a) husband entirely, (b) husband more than wife, (c) husband and wife the same, (d) wife more than husband, (e) wife entirely (for example, see Nye, 1976; Araji, 1977; Albrecht et al., 1979; Erickson et al., 1979, who also used this method). We asked not only about the *actual* division of family tasks but also about the *preferred* division of family tasks.

A test-retest analysis with an aselect group of 20 families indicated that a number of variables proved to be unstable (cf. Van IJzendoorn et al., 1980:58ff.). For the part of the questionnaire discussed above, this resulted in the deletion of the tenth and eleventh items for the actual division of family tasks and of the second, fifth, sixth, and tenth items for the preferred division of tasks. All of the analyses we discuss were based on the stable items. With respect to the spouses' activity pattern when both are at home (after 5 p.m. and on Sundays), both partners were asked independently of one another to indicate if in those periods they (a) were primarily involved in activities in which the children did not participate, (b) were primarily involved in the *care* of the children, or (c) primarily spent their time *playing* with the children (indoors or outdoors, games, sports, playground, etc.). The time period between 5 and 9 o'clock p.m. was subdivided into four periods of one hour each, for which a choice had to be made between a, b, or c.

RESULTS

The results¹ are discussed in two separate paragraphs. First we deal with the division of family tasks. Secondly we more generally examine some findings with respect to the spouses' activity pattern when both are at home.

The dimensions. The starting point for further analysis of the answers to the different items was a principal components analysis, through which we checked if the different aspects of family life included in the items (household, child care, and "pedagogical" activities) also were reflected as underlying dimensions in the questionnaire data. The analysis was done for husbands and wives together and separately in order to determine if the dimensional structure of both groups was the same. In the different analyses (items for preferred and actual division of family tasks; and in different groups: husbands, wives, and the total group), three factors emerged explaining approximately 40%-50% of the variance in the original variables.

The first factor is characterized by activities generally ascribed to the traditional "female" family role—e.g., making the beds, diapering the baby. This we would call a "care factor." A second factor concerns items ascribed to the traditional "male" family role—e.g., fixing a flat (bicycle) tire, changing a fuse. In this case we speak of a "chore factor." Activities like tussling clearly load on a third factor of a more "pedagogical" character (see Tavecchio et al., 1983 for details). These results serve as a starting point for the analysis of differences of opinion between husbands and wives concerning the actual and preferred division of family tasks to be discussed in the following sections.

The responses to the separate items. In Table 2 are shown for husbands and wives separately the means and standard deviations of the scores for the stable items. Lower mean scores indicate that the task concerned is performed more by the husband; higher mean scores point to a greater participation on the part of the wife. The data reflect the dimensional structure discussed previously. In the opinion of both wives and husbands, chores like fixing a flat (bicycle) tire, changing a fuse, etc. are primarily done by the husband, while a number of household and child-care activities like diapering, making beds, or vacuuming are performed primarily by the wife. In the middle are a number of activities—like tussling, cuddling, reading to the children, etc.—for which the division between the spouses appears to be symmetrical. With respect to the *preferred* division of family tasks, there appears to be a clearly observable tendency towards a less exclusively male and female division of tasks (see Table 3). *All* the averages have moved in the direction of the egalitarian middle of the 5-point scale used: "husband and wife the same." Although, on the one hand, there appears to exist a desire for a less

TABLE 2. MEANS (\bar{X}) AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS (*SD*) OF OPINIONS OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES ON THE ACTUAL DIVISION OF FAMILY TASKS

Task	\bar{X} Wives	\bar{X} Husbands	<i>SD</i> Wives	<i>SD</i> Husbands
(g) Fixing a flat (bicycle) tire	1.22	1.24	.56	.62
(o) Changing a fuse	1.78	1.72	.96	.92
(l) Driving the car	1.95	1.97	.85	.94
(d) Fixing broken toys	2.28	1.99	.92	.97
(i) Tussling with the children	2.76	2.70	.59	.61
(c) Cuddling the children	3.14	3.14	.40	.46
(f) Attending to the child when he/she cries at night	3.36	3.19	1.00	1.03
(m) Reading to the children	3.35	3.38	.83	.76
(b) Taking children to the bathroom	3.39	3.33	.65	.72
(n) Bottle-feeding the baby	3.75	3.63	.77	.66
(e) Diapering the baby	3.78	3.83	.76	.68
(h) Vacuuming	3.98	3.82	.78	.88
(a) Making the beds	4.16	4.13	.80	.86

distinct sex-role differentiation, the order of the different activities present in Table 2 can be found almost unaltered in Table 3. There remain clear differences in emphasis in the preferred division of family tasks between husbands and wives. Items relating to interaction with the children (tussling, cuddling, punishment, reading aloud) are considered by both groups to be least tied to the sex roles—an opinion, in view of the small variance, seemingly shared within both groups as well. In addition, the data in both tables demonstrate that husbands and wives place the different activities in approximately the same order with respect to both the actual and the preferred division of family tasks.²

In the following section it becomes clear that the large amount of agreement between husbands and wives as a group does not necessarily mean that there is 100% agreement between the individual spouses themselves on the actual mutual participation in different tasks.

Differences in outlook between spouses on actual and preferred division of family tasks. Bearing in mind the results of the principal components analysis, the different items relating to a particular factor were collectively subjected to

multivariate analysis with the aid of Hotelling T^2 (Morrison, 1976) as a first step, followed by univariate t tests for the individual items. Due to the dependence of the two groups (we are dealing, of course, with husbands and wives from the same families) the computations per item were done on the *difference scores* between the spouses. For the actual division of tasks, T^2 tests were done for the “care items” (a, b, e, f, h, and n), the “chore items” (d, g, l, and o), and the “interaction” or “pedagogical” items (c, i, and m). For the preferred division of tasks, the comparable groups consisted of the items a, h, m, and n, the items d, g, l, and o, and the items c, i, and k, respectively.

The analysis reveals that, regarding the actual division of tasks, the opinions of the two partners concerning the care items do not coincide. The difference is concentrated on the items f, h, and n (attending to the child at night, vacuuming, and bottle-feeding the baby). Inspection of the mean of the difference scores demonstrates a “positive” difference in all three cases—that is, a difference that would indicate a greater participation in these activities on the part of the wives. Since it concerns the spouses’ *opinions* on one another’s participation, the interpretation of the differences

TABLE 3. MEANS (\bar{X}) AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS (*SD*) OF OPINIONS OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES ON THE PREFERRED DIVISION OF FAMILY TASKS

Task	\bar{X} Wives	\bar{X} Husbands	<i>SD</i> Wives	<i>SD</i> Husbands
(g) Fixing a flat (bicycle) tire	1.68	1.64	.79	.84
(o) Changing a fuse	2.30	2.25	.87	.88
(d) Fixing broken toys	2.36	2.22	.80	.78
(l) Driving the car	2.43	2.61	.85	.85
(i) Tussling with the children	2.88	2.87	.39	.36
(k) Punishing the children	3.02	2.99	.33	.39
(c) Cuddling the children	3.02	3.01	.22	.23
(m) Reading to the children	3.03	3.07	.38	.45
(n) Bottle-feeding the baby	3.35	3.33	.58	.58
(h) Vacuuming	3.62	3.55	.72	.78
(a) Making the beds	3.70	3.81	.85	.84

ascertained is not unequivocal. Does this mean that in this case wives overestimate their own share (and somewhat belittle that of their husbands), or does it mean that the husbands overestimate their contribution to such activities (and tend as a result to underestimate their wives' share)? In both cases a "positive" mean difference occurs (cf. Albrecht et al., 1979:46-47, who found similar discrepancies between the reports of husbands and wives on housekeeping and child-care tasks). Analysis of the chore items also points to differing views between the two partners, although in this case one item, "fix broken toys," seems to explain most of the difference. Here, too, the difference in opinions ascertained turns out in "favor" of the wives. The "pedagogical" items showed no difference in opinion between the spouses. With respect to the *preferred* division of family tasks, it was impossible to show any difference of opinion between husbands and wives concerning any activity, neither univariate nor multivariate. While participation in the actual division of tasks was reason for some difference of opinion between partners, there seems to be a harmonious unanimity concerning the preferred division of family tasks (see Tavecchio et al., 1983 for a more detailed description of the results).

SES differences in views on actual and preferred division of family tasks. At the beginning of this article, we referred to the Dutch study of Meijnen (1977) which showed that, as socioeconomic status rose, less emphasis was placed on the desirability of a sex-related division of family tasks. At several points, Meijnen further discusses theories and research findings with respect to sex-role differentiation, all indicating similar conclusions (Meijnen, 1977:61, 119, 133ff.). About two decades ago, Miller and Riesman (1961) went so far as to call the segregation of roles between the sexes an *essential part* of the subculture of manual laborers. Bernstein (1971) argues that, in the lower socioeconomic groups, a *positional* family role structure dominates, and in the higher groups a *personal* role structure. In the former case, sex and age relationships in particular are the parameters of roles; in the latter, roles are described more in terms of the personal qualities of the individual. The question as to the extent of the connection between higher socioeconomic status and less marked division of roles was answered for husbands and wives separately. For this purpose the group of 166 families was divided into two SES groups: a relatively low-SES group, consisting of Levels 1 through 4 (cf. Table 1), and a relatively high-SES group, consisting of Levels 5 and 6 (the maximum *n* for the low group was 72, while for the high group it was 81). With the aid

of Hotelling T^2 test for the two independent random samples, the differences between the two SES groups were analyzed multivariately. With respect to the actual division of tasks, there only appeared to be a difference of opinion between the wives from the two socioeconomic groups concerning the traditionally male activities. Driving the car and fixing broken toys were considered to be less exclusively male by wives from the high-SES group. Also, with respect to the preferred division of tasks, there appeared to be SES differences only regarding the chore factor. For both wives and husbands, the difference was concentrated on "fixing broken toys." In this case too, the higher socioeconomic group advocates a less stringent division of tasks. For wives, this also applies for "driving the car" (cf. Tavecchio et al., 1983). To put it another way, within the investigated group as a whole, which with respect to SES was not particularly heterogeneous (cf. Table 1), *the desirability of a division of tasks among the lower SES groups* in particular emerged clearly. This supports Meijnen's findings and, as he had interviewed only wives, supplements them as well.

It is interesting to note that, with respect to both the actual and the preferred division of family tasks, no SES differences could be found in the care-factor items. The mean scores, for the wives as well, lay between 3.2 and 4.1 and thus indicate a greater participation on the part of the wives, both actual and *preferred*! This last result is relatively unexpected. On the one hand, the results point to the fact that wives in rising socioeconomic groups are increasingly prepared to do traditionally "male" chores. On the other hand, it appears that wives consider their actual greater participation in care-factor activities more or less preferable, even in the higher socioeconomic group (for example, mean scores of 3.7 for "making beds" and 3.6 for "vacuuming"). These results concur, for example, with what Haas (1980:294) observes in her study on the division of family tasks of "role-sharing couples": ". . . the wife's reluctance to give up her traditional authority over many domestic chores. . . . Not only did the wives have to contend with the husband's disinclination to do chores, they also had to cope with guilt feelings about abandoning their traditional role and with the mixed feelings they had seeing their husbands do nontraditional tasks." Of course, her research concerned couples with the explicit intention of achieving as egalitarian a division of family tasks and roles as possible. It very well may be that even wives pioneering in this area will not be willing or able to relinquish tasks traditionally assigned to them or to share them with others on an egalitarian basis (see also Albrecht et

al., 1979; and Vergeer and Van IJzendoorn, 1981).

A comparison of "traditional" families and families with employed wives. In the group we investigated, 28 wives (17%) were found to be working outside the home.³ In nearly all the cases, labor-force participation involved a part-time job; only three wives had full-time jobs. For these 28 families, we investigated whether the division of family tasks with respect to child-care and household activities deviated from that of more traditional families in which the wife was not employed. Sixty-five percent of the employed wives were at Level 6 socioeconomically. The average age of the employed wives' youngest children was 8.7 months ($SD = 3.7$ months), while that of the next to youngest children was 28.8 months ($SD = 5.1$). For nonemployed wives, these figures were 8.7 months ($SD = 4.9$) and 30.0 months ($SD = 5.0$), respectively. In this regard the two categories of wives hardly differed at all. In Table 4 are shown the most important differences in the division of family tasks (actual and preferred) between employed and nonemployed wives. The differences between the husbands of both categories of wives also are shown in this table.⁴ Between both categories of wives and their husbands, differences with respect to the actual division of tasks emerged only in the area of child-care activities. Changing diapers and taking the children to the bathroom were scored in a more egalitarian direction by employed wives than by nonemployed wives.

Among the husbands, taking the children to the bathroom and bottle-feeding the baby (and almost: attending to the child at night) were answered along more egalitarian lines by those with employed wives than by those with nonemployed wives. Although we are still concerned with the actual division of tasks as reported by the spouses, it does appear that in families with employed wives the husbands have a somewhat larger share of the child-care responsibility. This pattern toward greater husband involvement in employed wives' families also is reported by others (e.g., Gecas, 1976; Slocum and Nye, 1976; Pleck, 1979; Ericksen et al., 1979; Huber and Spitze, 1981). The differences in mean scores on most of the other items also point in the same direction, though not significantly. Nevertheless, most of the work is still done by the wives, with only relatively small, marginal adjustments (see also Clason, 1977:48; Kooy, 1979:93; Miller and Garrison, 1982:240).

With respect to the preferred division of family tasks, there were differences between the two groups of wives concerning making the beds,

TABLE 4. DIFFERENCES IN OPINION ABOUT ACTUAL AND PREFERRED DIVISION OF FAMILY TASKS BETWEEN EMPLOYED WIVES AND NONEMPLOYED WIVES AND BETWEEN THEIR HUSBANDS

Task	Employed Wives		Nonemployed Wives		Husbands of Employed Wives		Husbands of Nonemployed Wives		z	p
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD		
	Actual Division of Family Tasks									
(b) Taking children to the bathroom	3.13	.46	3.44	.67	3.08	.48	3.38	.75	-2.3	.02
(c) Diapering the baby	3.56	.70	3.82	.77	2.89	.92	3.26	1.04	-1.9	.055
(f) Attending to the child when he/she cries at night					3.37	.69	3.69	.64	-2.1	.04
(m) Bottle-feeding the baby					3.41	.80	3.89	.82	-2.7	.01
(a) Making the beds					2.73	.78	2.14	.76	-3.3	.00
(d) Fixing broken toys	2.04	.86	1.62	.77	2.17	1.05	1.58	.78	-2.7	.01
(g) Fixing a flat (bicycle) tire	3.35	.56	3.67	.75	3.25	.65	3.62	.79	-2.2	.03
(h) Vacuuming					3.15	.36	3.37	.60	-1.9	.059
(n) Bottle-feeding the baby					2.58	.64	2.20	.91	-2.0	.04
(o) Changing a fuse										
	Preferred Division of Family Tasks									
(a) Making the beds	3.37	.88	3.77	.82	3.41	.80	3.89	.82	-2.7	.01
(d) Fixing broken toys					2.73	.78	2.14	.76	-3.3	.00
(g) Fixing a flat (bicycle) tire	2.04	.86	1.62	.77	2.17	1.05	1.58	.78	-2.7	.01
(h) Vacuuming	3.35	.56	3.67	.75	3.25	.65	3.62	.79	-2.2	.03
(n) Bottle-feeding the baby					3.15	.36	3.37	.60	-1.9	.059
(o) Changing a fuse					2.58	.64	2.20	.91	-2.0	.04

vacuuming, and fixing a flat (bicycle) tire. In the case of the first two activities, employed wives desire that participation be less exclusively female than do nonemployed wives. According to employed wives, fixing a flat (bicycle) tire should be a less exclusively male activity. With respect to making the beds, vacuuming (and almost: bottle-feeding the baby), husbands of employed wives prefer to consider these activities as less exclusively female, more so than the husbands of nonemployed wives. The "chore items"—fixing broken toys, fixing a flat (bicycle) tire, and changing a fuse—were scored by this category of husbands as less exclusively male. In the families of employed wives, as the answers of both spouses attest, there indeed is an unmistakable *desire for a more egalitarian relationship* in several areas of family life. These results are in complete agreement with findings reported by Clason (1977:98) and Scanlon (1980:132). Despite the observed shift towards a more egalitarian relationship, employed wives continue to prefer not to completely relinquish responsibilities with respect to certain household activities in particular (cf. Table 4, preferred division of family tasks: for making the beds, $\bar{X} = 3.37$; for vacuuming, $\bar{X} = 3.35$). These results concur with Haas's (1980:294) remarks concerning her study of "role-sharing couples," which we cited earlier.

The Activity Pattern of Spouses When Both Are at Home

In order to gain insight into the spouses' activity pattern when both are at home, husbands and wives were asked independently to indicate which of the following three activities they did *most*:

1. Activities in which the children do not participate (e.g., work around the house, reading the paper, cooking, etc.);
2. Caring for the children (e.g., washing the children, bringing them to bed, dressing or undressing them, etc.);
3. Playing with the children in the house (e.g., doing puzzles, reading to the children, singing, tussling, etc.) or activities with the children outside the house (e.g., swimming, cycling, going to the playground or zoo, etc.).

The time frame was 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays and Sundays. In order to obtain as accurate a picture as possible, this time period was divided into four hour-long subsections, for which the respondents had to designate one of the three activity types.

Differences in activity patterns between the spouses. In Table 5 are shown the numbers of

wives (rows) and husbands (columns) that are occupied with the activities 1, 2, or 3 during the four subperiods. The weekday pattern is in the upper part of the table, and the Sunday pattern is in the lower half. For all the families in which *both the husband and the wife responded*, the answers of both spouses were cross-tabulated per activity. Thus, along the diagonals of the eight cross-tabulations are shown the "agreement data" between the partners, while the differences in the spouses' activity patterns are in the remaining cells. At "family level" in particular, these differences are of interest to us. In order to see if the spouses in the group we examined differ, a comparison must be made between the cells in the triangle to the upper right of the diagonals and the cells on their lower left. A statistical testing procedure sensitive to asymmetrical shifts of the activity pattern toward one partner is the *sign test* (cf. Siegel, 1956). In the first cross-tabulation of Table 5 (activity pattern of husband and wife between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m.), the 46 + differences in the upper right triangle are compared with the 26 - differences in the lower left triangle. This asymmetrical distribution results in a significant difference in activity patterns between the two spouses ($z = 2.24, p = .03$, 2-tailed). In the second cross-tabulation the + differences (36) and the - differences (38) balance one another out; in other words, there is no difference in activity patterns between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. ($z = .12, p = .91$, 2-tailed). Analogously, the differences between the partners were tested and interpreted for the six remaining cross-tabulations of Table 5, always in combination with an examination of the "raw" data. For the weekday activity pattern from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. and from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m., no differences between husbands and wives were found.

For Sundays, differences between the activity patterns of husbands and wives were discovered between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. ($z = 4.83, p = .00$), between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. ($z = 2.37, p = .02$), and between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. ($z = 2.36, p = .02$). Between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. the husbands are much more frequently involved in recreational or creative activities in and around the house with the children (Activity 3) than are the wives. Between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. the husbands are somewhat more occupied with the children than are the wives; and along with child-care activities, they also devote somewhat more time to Activity 3 than do the wives. Finally, between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. the wife spends somewhat more time on Activity 3; but the shift is still most visible in the direction of greater participation on the part of the wife in activities with the children in general, especially in the child-care area.

TABLE 6. COMPARISON OF TIME SPENT ON VARIOUS HOME ACTIVITIES DURING THE WEEK (ROWS) AND ON SUNDAYS (COLUMNS) FOR WIVES AND HUSBANDS

Activity	SUNDAYS												
	5 p.m.-6 p.m.			6 p.m.-7 p.m.			7 p.m.-8 p.m.			8 p.m.-9 p.m.			
	1	2	3	Total	1	2	3	Total	1	2	3	Total	
W	78 ^a	0	43	121	17	2	4	23	43	9	0	52	131
E	0	9	4	13	5	76	9	90	4	72	5	81	0
E	3	0	21	24	6	4	34	44	1	3	17	21	3
K	81	9	68	158	28	82	47	157	48	84	22	154	134
D													
A													
Y													
S	26	9	64	99	13	10	9	32	55	9	2	66	134
1.	0	4	2	6	4	58	7	69	8	57	2	67	2
2.	6	0	41	47	1	7	45	53	3	4	14	21	1
3.	32	13	107	152	18	75	61	154	66	70	18	154	137
Total													

Note: See text for further explanation.

^a Boldface numbers indicate participation in the same activities during the week and on Sundays.

ties with children on Sundays between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. More employed wives spend time on Activity 3 than do nonemployed wives ($\chi^2 = 8.75$, $df = 2$, $p = .01$). The husbands of employed wives appeared to do more with their children both on weekdays and on Sundays between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. than do husbands of nonemployed wives. This difference in activity pattern expresses itself in a greater participation in both the child-care and the recreational and creative activities ($\chi^2 = 8.28$, $df = 2$, $p = .02$ on weekdays and $\chi^2 = 21.68$, $df = 2$, $p = .00$ on Sundays, respectively). It should be remembered, moreover, that 65% of the employed wives are from the highest socioeconomic group. This probably explains in part the similarities between the results reported in the last two sections.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Many studies on the division of family tasks have relied on data from separate individuals rather than actual couples. The data for this study, however, describe married couples with young children, so that the family is the unit of analysis. With respect to the actual and preferred division of family tasks between husband and wife, the outcome of a principal components analysis clearly confirmed our a priori notion that a distinction can be made between activities traditionally considered specifically female and specifically male. In addition to a (female) care factor and a (male) chore factor, the outcome also seemed to support the existence of a "pedagogical" or interaction factor, which concerns activities such as cuddling and tussling with children and which appears to be less exclusively associated with one specific parent. When asked about their wishes with respect to the division of family tasks, both wives and husbands gave answers tending towards more egalitarianism. Nevertheless, the traditional differences in emphasis remain clearly observable even in the preferred division of family tasks. Owing to the consequences of attitudinal differences between husband and wife at the *family level*, such differences are, of course, the most interesting. With regard to the *actual* division of family tasks, a multivariate analysis of the difference scores between the spouses pointed towards a significant difference with respect to care-factor activities; and these differences were "in favor" of the wives. The same result was found for the chore-factor activities. With respect to the *preferred* division of family tasks, we could find no difference of opinion between the spouses with respect to any activity. Here is another clear instance of the frequently discovered discrepancy between ideal and reality.

Attitudes on division of family tasks appear to be associated with socioeconomic status, particularly with respect to chore-factor activities, the traditional male activities. This finding supports Meijnen's results concerning the *desirability of role division in lower socioeconomic groups*—and supplements them besides, since he had interviewed only wives.

There also appeared to be some differences of opinion between the (relatively small) group of employed wives and the majority of nonemployed wives. With respect to the actual division of family tasks, it seems that in families with employed wives *both spouses* provided more egalitarian answers to questions on care-factor activities relating directly to the children (taking the children to the bathroom, changing diapers, bottle-feeding the baby). These results concur with Grønseth's (1975) findings concerning families that aim at a more symmetrical division of tasks. He discovered that in such families, the fathers had an approximately equal share in the care of the children, although in other areas the traditional distinction between male and female tasks continued to exist. With respect to the preferred division of responsibilities, there appeared to be a development towards a more egalitarian relationship in families with wives in the labor force. On the other hand, the differences do not seem to be fundamental. As we have observed already, it very well may concern relatively incidental, marginal adjustments. It would appear that the "symmetrical family" (Young and Willmott, 1974) remains an ideal. It is possible that the differences in division of tasks decrease as the wife spends more time working outside the home. In the group we investigated, the husband was the most important breadwinner in all cases, with the wife almost always having a part-time job; however, Clason's findings (1977) that married women who work are less willing to accept the existing sex-role differentiation than those not working outside the home were supported.

What general differences in activity pattern emerge at times when both spouses are at home? An analysis at the "family level" showed that the husband clearly plays a recreational and creative role in the family life, especially on Sundays at the end of the afternoon and the beginning of the evening. Our findings that the father plays with the children more when both parents are home concur with the research results of others (e.g., Lamb, 1977; and Clarke-Stewart, 1978). From a different point of view, our findings lend support to Berk and Berk's (1979:233) observation that

husbands assume little of the overall burden but engage in less onerous activities (such as playing with the children!) when wives are engaged in other chores. With respect to child-care activities, the father helps more on Sundays than on weekdays. From 7 p.m. the wives take over again, and the husbands begin to withdraw.

Differences between socioeconomic groups and between families in which both partners work (outside the home) and those in which only the husbands work ran somewhat parallel. On Sundays between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m., wives from higher socioeconomic groups and employed wives are more occupied with their children in a recreational or creative sense than are wives from lower socioeconomic groups and nonemployed wives. Especially on Sundays between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m., fathers from higher socioeconomic groups and husbands of employed wives participate more with their children than do fathers from lower socioeconomic groups and husbands of nonemployed wives. This increased participation concerns both the child-care and the recreational or creative activities. Between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. on weekdays, husbands of employed wives also make an extra contribution, regarding child-care activities, among others. Nevertheless, the question as to whether socioeconomic status or wife's employment has a decisive impact on the division of family tasks between the spouses requires more study.

In conclusion, the results of our research point to an egalitarian tendency with respect to the division of family tasks, although reality lags behind the more egalitarian ideals and wishes. We purposely use the phrase egalitarian *tendency*, since at this time a completely symmetrical division of tasks is hardly being pursued, let alone realized. Even in families with employed wives, the emphasis remains upon the wife's fulfilling specific household tasks. To a certain extent this is comparable to the situation in countries where more than three-quarters of the women work outside the home, as in the Soviet Union. There, too, working outside the home sometimes results in an inordinate "overload" on the wife, since she still takes responsibility for the lion's share of the household work (Sacks, 1977; Pleck, 1979). As long as men are not truly prepared to carry a larger share of the family tasks and women do not emancipate themselves from the feeling that housework and childrearing are their fundamental moral duties (cf. Dowling, 1982), increased involvement of the woman outside the home will result primarily in an increase of her burdens.

FOOTNOTES

1. In analyzing the data we used the SPSS program package (Nie et al., 1975, 1981), and the BMDP-package (Version 3D, November, 1979; see also Dixon and Brown, 1977). Due to the exploratory nature of the research, all analyses were two-tailed.
2. Within the groups the correlations between views on actual and preferred division of family tasks for the 10 items range from .72 (making the beds) to .52 (tussling) for the husbands, with a mean r of .59; for wives the range is .64 (fixing broken toys) to .27 (cuddling), with a mean r of .51 (in both cases; $p < .001$, two-tailed).
3. The number of mothers with young children participating in the paid labor force in the Netherlands has shown a marked increase in the last two decades. In 1960 the number of employed mothers with a child under 4 years of age was negligible; in 1971 it was 8%; in 1975 it was 12.4%; and in 1979 it had amounted to 15.6% (Rijswijk-Clerkx, 1983). This trend toward increased participation is continuing, although in 1979 the overall percentage of employed women was still only 26. In neighboring countries comparable figures are remarkably higher—e.g., Denmark (50%) or France and Germany (both about 40%). Siegers (1982) reports that 45% of all employed Dutch women aged 15-65 participate in part-time jobs, while for men this is less than 5%. For employed mothers with preschool children, the percentage of part-time job participation undoubtedly is much higher.
4. Due in part to the large difference in numbers of observations and to the sometimes sizable variance differences, the employed and nonemployed wives and their husbands were compared with the help of a nonparametric procedure for two independent samples, the Mann-Whitney U test. Because of this the differences between the different groups were analyzed per item, that is, univariately. The mean scores for the items are given as an illustration.

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