

Roles in the Family

Young & Willmott – Symmetrical Family

Free time is spent doing chores & odd jobs around the house, & leisure is mainly 'home-based'. The conjugal bond is strong & relationship between husband & wife are increasingly companionate. They shared their work they shared their time

Wives still have the main responsibility for raising the children, although husbands help. Contribution to household is similar in terms. Share many chores –decisions, work together, yet there is still men's work & women's work.

From Y & W research – 72% husbands did housework

Y & W are amongst those who have argued that conjugal roles are becoming joint. However, most sociologists who have carried out research in this area have found little evidence that inequality within marriage has been significantly reduced.

Conjugal roles, housework & childcare

Ann Oakley - men who make a very small contribution to housework would be included in the 72%. She found greater equality in teams of allocation of domestic tasks between spouses in the middle class than in the working class. However, in both classes few men had a high level of participation in housework & childcare.

Stephen Edgell & in the *British Social Attitudes Survey* - more sharing of child rearing than household tasks. Movement towards a more egalitarian household division of labour with time. More households where men did most of the washing & ironing, cooking, cleaning, shopping & washing up. Repairing household equipment -only type of task usually done by men.

Mary Boulton-although men help; women retain primary responsibility for children.

Conjugal roles & hours worked

Y & W collected information on how husband & wives spend their time – women not in paid work did least work, although women with part time work did rather more work than men. However, this difference (men & women) was not great.

Oakley- women double burden-paid work + doing household.

Jonathan Gershuny-men did seem to be making more effort to do household when women had paid work.

Graham Allan-work women carry in home may be tedious & less satisfying than the more creative tasks that is done by men. However, one can also say that men's paid work may also be alienating.

Sullivan-how similar the overall proportion of the time spent on leisure activities is for the two sexes. The extra time that women spend on domestic tasks is almost exactly equivalent to the overall level to the extra time that men spend doing paid work, leaving the same proportion of leisure time for both.

Conjugal roles & power

Another approach to studying conjugal roles is to examine power within marriage - who makes the decisions.

Edgell – Wives dominated in those areas of decision making concerning interior decorations, domestic spending & children's clothes → considered unimportant (minor decisions)

Men dominated three areas of decision making - those relating to moving house, finance & the car → regarded as important (involving large sums of money); husband decided the overall allocation of financial resources

In a more recent study – although men still dominated in most households, this was not these in a significant minority of households. There was therefore some evidence of a small move towards more egalitarian relationship.

Conjugal roles & money management

Jan Pahl - Husband controlled pooling most common – money shared but the husband dominated how it is to be spend; Wife controlled pooling 2nd; Husband control 3rd – husband gave wife housekeeping money; Wife control 4th.

There had been an increase in the proportion of relationships with egalitarian financial arrangements, however a big majority where a significant degree of inequality remained.

Conjugal roles – invisible & emotional work

DeVault – feeding also involves planing & staging the meal as an event – great deal of invisible work. It is difficult for women to relax once a meal is ready since it is soon time to start planning the next one. Women are mainly responsible for feeding. This is more demanding & time consuming task, than physical labour.

Jean Duncombe & Dennis Marsden – invisible element of women's domestic work – emotional work. Women end up doing triple shift-paid work, housework, emotional work as well. The women do most of the emotional work in the family.

Dunne-women are still a long way from achieving equality within marriage. They are still primary responsible for domestic tasks & they have less clearcut. Husbands of wives with full-time jobs do seem to be taking over some of the burden of housework, although the change is slow & some inequality remains.

Christine Delphy & Diana Leonard

Women also contribute a great deal to their husbands work & leisure by providing:

- for their emotional & sexual well-being
- direct help - eg doing office work for a self employed husband, proofreading books if their husband is an author, or constituency work if he is an MP, answer the phone to arrange dinner parties
- moral support, listen when to husbands problems.
- trouble-free sex
- make the house into a home - comfortable, warm & undemanding
- control their own emotions to provide emotional care for husbands +give them a sense of well-being

Men make little contribution to their wives' work. They find it psychologicly, socially or legally impossible' to work under their wives' direction. Some assistance but the husband's career remains the central one.