

The Influence of Women's Money on Cooking & Cleaning

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Abstract: Which is more important for women's core housework — their relative earnings, or their own, individual earnings. Recent research suggests own earnings may have more influence, but assumes the relationship between earnings and housework is the same for all types of housework. Using a sample of partnered, employed women from the 2003-2008 American Time Use Survey (ATUS), we disaggregate routine housework into the core activities of cooking, cleaning, and laundry to determine if the relationship between women's absolute and relative earnings and housework varies with type of housework. We expect earnings will have different associations with different types of housework because of three reasons: differences in their gendered meanings; differences in their temporal dimensions; and differences in their outsourcing markets. Preliminary results indicate earnings affect only cooking and doing dishes but have no association with other cleaning tasks.

Which is more important for women's housework — their relative earnings, or their own, individual earnings? Until recently, the dominance of two theoretical perspectives has limited the research focus to relative earnings. The *dependence* or *exchange* model proposes that women's housework has a linear negative association with their relative earning because the partner with higher earnings parlays their greater bargaining power into less time on chores like housework. In contrast, the *display* perspective posits a nonlinear association between relative earnings and women's housework, theorizing that as women's earnings approach and/or exceed their male partners' earnings, women should do more housework to offset the threat to each partner's gender identity posed by gender-atypical relative earnings. Results from the ample literature are inconclusive (Coltrane 2000): single country and cross-national studies offer support for both dependence/exchange (Bittman et al. 2003) and display (Brines 1994; Greenstein 2000; Gupta 1999; South and Spitze 1994).

Countering both, Gupta's (2006; 2007) new *autonomy* model theorizes women's housework is negatively associated only with their own, absolute earnings, not their relative earnings; using NSFH data, he finds that women's own earnings decrease their own housework, whereas their male partner's earnings have no association with women's housework (or men's own housework). Focusing on economic disparities among women may shed more light on the question of who does the housework because women, like men, are autonomous economic actors within households.

One major limitation of all three models is their shared assumption that the relationship between earnings and housework is the same for all types of housework. Using a sample of partnered, employed women from the 2003-2008 American Time Use Survey (ATUS), we advance inquiry in two ways. First, we disaggregate routine housework into the core activities of cooking, cleaning, and laundry to determine if the relationship between women's absolute and relative earnings and housework varies with type of housework. We expect earnings will have different associations with different types of housework because of three reasons: differences in their gendered meanings; differences in their temporal dimensions; and differences in their outsourcing markets.

The key axis differentiating the gendered meaning of housework tasks is whether activities go into "feeding the family" or instead part of "maintaining cleanliness" (Twiggs, McQuillan, and Ferree 1999). Cooking is an emotionally charged experience because it creates

and solidifies family bonds by expressing care and connection (DeVault 1991). This suggests that earnings may not differentiate time cooking because all women will be reluctant to give up time cooking. However, studies of class differences in food consumption patterns and “foodie” culture suggest the meaning of cooking differs among women by earnings. Johnston (2010) finds women foodies justify their intense involvement with food in two ways: first, they emphasize how their provision of tasty, high-quality nutritional sustenance helps maintain family health; and second, they emphasize how their involvement cultivates an appreciation among family members for cooking as an aesthetic art, linking cooking with social reproduction of class status. Women with higher earnings may thus use their earnings to buy out of emotionally neutral activities, like cleaning, and channel time into more rewarding activities like cooking.

Cooking, cleaning and doing laundry also have distinct temporal aspects that should be related to women’s ability to use earnings to reduce housework. Cooking is a time-specific activity that is regulated not just with the necessity of eating each day but with the social rituals governing appropriate mealtimes. This suggests that earnings may have no association with cooking, because cooking is an activity that most women do every day. In contrast, maintaining a sanitary environment and having clean clothes do not require time investments every day of the week, and higher earning women may do them less often because of lower standards and/or higher incentives to spend time in other ways.

Last, we expect earnings to operate differently on cooking, cleaning, and laundry time because of their different outsourcing markets. Outsourcing is more readily available and affordable for activities like cooking and weekly cleaning than activities like tidying up the house each evening and doing laundry. Women can substitute earnings for time cooking by purchasing readily available convenience products, like prepared food and sauces, as well as through eating out, a conjecture supported by studies of consumer expenditure data (Cohen 1998; Treas and de Ruijter 2008). Activities like laundry are less easily outsourced because the market is less developed, suggesting earnings may have no association with laundry.

Data and Method

We use pooled time diary data from the 2003-2007 American Time Use Study, or ATUS (Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S.Census Bureau 2008). This is the first federally administered time diary survey in the United States and was designed to collect nationally representative data

on how adults allocate time to paid work, unpaid work, self care, and leisure (Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S.Census Bureau 2004). Time diaries cover the period from 4 am to 4 am on the day prior to the telephone interview, and information is collected on all types of activity episodes, persons present during the activity, and where the activity took place. The ATUS sample consists of all noninstitutionalized U.S. residents age 15 and over and is drawn from outgoing rotations of the Current Population Survey. As such, the ATUS also contains high-quality data on employment, earnings, and salient household and individual characteristics. The response rate was 57% in 2003, 58% in 2004, 57% in 2005, 55.1 in 2006 and 52.5 in 2007. We pool the five years of data to reduce variability from relying on only a single year of data and increase the sample size of women and men in each racial-ethnic category.

Our analysis sample includes 12847 married and cohabiting women. We exclude women who are self-employed or employed in a family business because ATUS does not collect earnings data from them and exclude women who are retired, full-time students or disabled. We include only employed because we want to focus on associations of earnings with housework and data do not allow modeling potential endogeneity of time in paid work and housework. Weights are used in all analyses to correct for nonresponse and adjust for the ATUS oversample of weekend days. A number of studies have established the accuracy and reliability of the time diary method, in particular for household activities (Juster 1999; Marini and Shelton 1993; Robinson and Godbey 1999).

Preliminary Results

We examine hours per day in time cooking, doing dishes, other cleaning activities, and laundry. Hours per day in these tasks is constructed by summing time in these activities across the diary day. Weekly earnings are measured in dollars. Models control for respondent's paid work hours, education, (college coded 1, noncollege coded 0), occupation (professional = 1; other = 0), age, and presence of children in the household.

Table 1 shows average minutes per week spent in all core housework, and in cooking, doing dishes, other cleaning, and doing laundry, and the effect of an additional 100 dollars in earnings on minutes in housework activities. Preliminary results indicate earnings affect only cooking and doing dishes but have no association with other cleaning tasks. Earnings effects are modest: for every 100 dollar increase in earnings women's time cooking

declines by 2.5 minutes and time doing dishes by .08 minutes. Preliminary results also indicate that associations of earnings on cooking and cleaning vary between women by work hours. Additionally, earnings reduce time doing laundry, but only on the weekend among women who work more than 7 hours per week.

Results suggest interactions of earnings with weekend and weekday diary days, as well as other dimensions of economic resources, like work hours. By the time of the PAA, we plan to explore these dynamics. We also plan to go beyond the usual polynomial regression models of the relationship between earnings and housework activity time and conduct (i) nonparametric analyses and (ii) introduce splines in earnings. The advantage of nonparametric methods is that they do not impose *a priori* linear or quadratic forms on the relationship; rather, they allow its functional form to emerge from the data. Our addition of splines is motivated by Gupta and Ash 2008 and Achen and Gough's 2009 Panel Study of Income Dynamics analysis that finds housework declines sharply as a woman's earnings approach median earnings, but does not decline further among women earning above median wages. This suggests that women's ability to leverage financial resources into time is limited by market constraints, such as inability to outsource certain types of housework or gender constraints that impel women to do at least some housework tasks but perhaps not others. We apply results from both techniques to address each possibility.

DAILY HOUSEWORK MINUTES SPENT AND SAVED PER \$100 OF OWN EARNINGS, BY TASK TYPE AND WEEKEND

		Fewer than 7 hours of paid work			7 or more hours of paid work	
		weekday	weekend	Total	weekday	weekend
all core	mean minutes spent	126.2	128.5	127.8	53.7	51.7
	sd	109.9	114.8	113.4	55.6	63.4
	minutes saved per \$100 of own earnings	-4.6 **	0.0 **		-2.3 ***	-2.3 ***
cooking	mean	41.2	40.9	40.9	25.9	21.1
	sd	45.4	52.2	50.3	30.3	33.1
	minutes saved per \$100 of own earnings	-2.5 *	0.0 *		-0.9 **	-0.9 **
dishes	mean	15.6	13.9	14.4	8.3	6.1
	sd	24.3	24.7	24.6	14.8	15.1
	minutes saved per \$100 of own earnings	-0.8 *	-0.8 *		-0.4 *	-0.4 *
cleaning	mean	43.5	45.6	45.0	9.7	12.1
	sd	69.3	76.1	74.2	28.6	34.1
	minutes saved per \$100 of own earnings	-0.7	-0.7		-0.4	-0.4
laundry	mean	25.9	24.9	27.5	9.8	10.1
	sd	48.8	47.3	51.9	24.6	31.1
	minutes saved per \$100 of own earnings	-0.6	-0.6		-0.7 *	-0.7 *
N		2370	5797	8167	3854	5113

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