

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 424 498

CG 028 775

AUTHOR Alexandrova, Elina O.  
TITLE Who Does What, Why, and How It Affects Parental Relationships during Children's Transition to School.  
PUB DATE 1998-08-00  
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the American Psychological Association Annual Convention (106th, San Francisco, CA, August 14-18, 1998).  
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Child Rearing; Children; Early Childhood Education; Family Life; \*Housework; Life Satisfaction; \*Marital Satisfaction; Marriage; \*Parent Attitudes; Parent Role; Student Adjustment  
IDENTIFIERS \*Division of Labor (Household)

## ABSTRACT

Division of labor in the family is viewed as an indicator of relative power and justice in a marital relationship. During the transition to parenthood it becomes one of the most salient correlates of marital satisfaction. This study examines the relationship between the division of family labor and marital quality as well as changes in this relationship during the first child's transition to school. The results show that while the overall way family labor is divided between spouses remains relatively constant across this transition, satisfaction with labor division increases while marital satisfaction declines. However, husbands' greater participation in family labor is associated with higher marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives. During the transition to school, the quality of parents' marriage can be explained in part by the relationships among wife's work characteristics, spouses' ideal and actual labor division, and their satisfaction with the division. In families where wives have a higher work status, both spouses have ideals of more equal labor division, actual labor is divided more equally, and both spouses are more satisfied with labor division, which in turn is associated with higher marital quality.  
(Author/AA)

\*\*\*\*\*  
\* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
\* from the original document. \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

## Who Does What, Why, and How It Affects Parental Relationships During Children's Transition to School

*Elina O. Alexandrova*  
University of California, Berkeley\*

### ABSTRACT

Division of labor in the family is viewed as an indicator of relative power and justice in a marital relationship. During the transition to parenthood it becomes one of the most salient correlates of marital satisfaction. This study examines the relationship between the division of family labor and marital quality as well as changes in this relationship during the first child's transition to school. The results show that while the overall way family labor is divided between spouses remains relatively constant across this transition, satisfaction with labor division increases, whereas marital satisfaction declines. However, husbands' greater participation in family labor is associated with higher marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives. During the transition to school, the quality of parents' marriage can be explained in part by the relationships among wife's work characteristics, spouses' ideal and actual labor division, and their satisfaction with the division. In families where wives have a higher work status both spouses have ideals of more equal labor division, actual labor is divided more equally, and both spouses are more satisfied with labor division, which in turn is associated with higher marital quality.

Who  
Does  
What?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

\* University of California, Berkeley  
Department of Psychology  
3210 Tolman #1650  
Berkeley, CA 94720-1650  
elina@socrates.berkeley.edu

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS  
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

E. ALEXANDROVA

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

## INTRODUCTION

- Division of labor in the family is considered an indicator of relative power and justice in a marital relationship (Greenstein, 1996). As such, it becomes the core relationship issue during the *transition to parenthood* (Cowan & Cowan, 1988). Does it remain similarly salient during the *transition to school*?
- Although the dual-*paid* work reality created expectations for dual-*unpaid* (family) work reality, both employed and non-employed women still do the lion's share of family work (Demo & Acock, 1993). Why, while feeling overwhelmed and overloaded, do only 1/3 of wives feel that the unequal division of labor is *unfair* (Barnett & Baruch, 1987)?
- The more husbands contribute to family labor, the more their *wives* are satisfied with labor division and the marriage (Thompson & Walker, 1989). How does husbands' contribution relate to *their own* satisfaction?
- Actual labor *division* is associated with marital satisfaction, and so is *satisfaction* with labor division (Benin & Agostinelli, 1988). Which is more important, the reality or its evaluation?

## PURPOSES

- Explore the relationship between labor division and marital quality and changes in this relationship during the first child's transition to school.
- Identify and examine social/psychological mediators of the relationship between labor division and marital quality.

## METHOD

### *PARTICIPANTS*

- The subjects were participants in the larger *School Children and Their Families* project (Cowan & Cowan, 1997).
- This study included only those 54 families who had completed all the measures of interest.
- The data were collected before the first child entered kindergarten, at the end of the kindergarten year, and again after the child's completion of first grade.
- 89% of the subjects were Caucasian and 11% were African-American, Asian-American, or Hispanic.
- All parents were employed at least part-time.

- The average family income for these 2-parent dual-worker San Francisco Bay Area families was \$84,259 (ranging from \$19,000 to \$250,000).

## MEASURES

- Who Does What? (Cowan & Cowan, 1990a).

This self-report instrument assesses perceptions of relative responsibility for household tasks and childcare as well as satisfaction with tasks division. Each spouse rates his/her relative involvement in 13 household and 20 childcare tasks. The first of the 2 identical parts measures current labor division, the second measures ideal or preferred division of tasks. The second part is used here as a proxy for gender role ideology.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>she does it all</i>									<i>he does it all</i>

- The Short Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959).

This 16-item self-report instrument differentiates clinically distressed from nondistressed couples. It provides a global index of marital satisfaction and an overall marital conflict score.

- Work and Family Life (Schulz, 1994).

This self-report measure assesses various aspects of one's outside employment (i.e., income, hours of work).

- The Pie (Cowan & Cowan, 1990b).

This instrument assesses one's sense of psychological involvement in his/her major life roles and relationships.

## RESULTS

**GOAL I:** To examine the division of labor in the family and its changes during the first child's transition to school.

**Procedures:**

1. Descriptive Statistics
2. Two by three (gender by time) Analyses of Variance.

### **Results:**

- The overall household labor is divided relatively *equally* between spouses. However, spouses perform significantly more of the tasks traditionally assigned to their gender (women cook and clean while men care for cars and yards).
- The overall childcare is divided relatively *unequally* between spouses (women do more childcare than men).
- Ideally, husbands and wives prefer that the overall household labor division stays *the same* and that women do not only *more* childcare than men, but also *more* of it than they used to do before the transition.

- The ways household and childcare tasks are divided between spouses remain relatively *constant* across the transition to school.

---

Insert Table 1 about here

---

**GOAL II:** To examine *between-spouse differences* and *time changes* in psychological involvement in housekeeping, satisfaction with labor division, and marital quality.

**Procedures:** Two by three (gender by time) Analyses of Variance.

**Results:**

- Both spouses report *increasingly less* involvement in housekeeping roles during the transition to school.
- Wives perceive a significantly *greater inequality* in both household and childcare division and are much more *dissatisfied* with labor division than their husbands.
- Husbands and wives become increasingly *more satisfied* with labor division during the transition.
- Both spouses report *similar* levels of marital satisfaction, and these levels *decline* during the transition.

---

Insert Table 2 about here

---

**GOAL III:** To examine the relationship between labor division and marital quality.

**Procedure:** Latent variables path analyses with partial least squares estimation: pre-transition, post-transition, and short-term longitudinal models for each spouse.

**Results:**

- The patterns of relationships among the variables are similar for husbands and wives before and after the transition to school.
- A significant amount of variance in marital quality can be explained by a combination of wife's work characteristics, spouse's ideal and actual labor division, and his/her satisfaction with the division:

<i>Before transition</i>	27% ♂	16% ♀
<i>After transition</i>	40% ♂	28% ♀

- In families where wives have a higher work status, husbands and wives tend to have more

egalitarian ideals of labor division, divide actual labor more equally, be more satisfied with labor division, and enjoy higher marital quality.

- When partners with egalitarian ideology share family labor equally, both of them are satisfied with labor division; if ideals of equal labor division are not accompanied by equality of actual labor division, they are associated with dissatisfaction with labor division.
- Labor division-related variables contribute little to explain post-transition marital quality over and above pre-transition marital quality.

---

Insert Table 3 about here

---

## CONCLUSIONS

- During the first child's transition to school the issue of labor division in the family is ***much less salient*** for marital satisfaction than it is during the transition to parenthood.
- During the transition to school, household labor is divided relatively equally between spouses, while childcare is not, with women doing a greater share than men. The ways in which family labor is divided between spouses remain ***stable*** during this transition.
- Women perceive much ***greater inequality*** and are much ***less satisfied*** with labor division than men.
- Although satisfaction with labor division ***increases*** while marital satisfaction ***decreases*** during the transition for both spouses, husbands' ***greater participation*** in family labor is associated with ***higher marital satisfaction*** not only for their wives, but also for the husbands themselves.
- In families where wives have a higher work status, both husbands and wives have ideals of more equal labor division, actual labor tends to be divided more equally, and both spouses feel more satisfied with labor division, which in turn is associated with ***higher marital quality***.

## REFERENCES

- Barnett, R.C., & Baruch, G.K. (1987). Determinants of fathers' participation in family work. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 49, 29-40.
- Benin, M.H. & Agostinelli, J. (1988). Husbands' and wives' satisfaction with the division of labor. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50, 349-361.
- Cowan, C.P., & Cowan, P.A. (1997). Working with couples during stressful transitions. In S. Dreman (Ed.), The Family on the Threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (pp. 17-47). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Cowan, C.P., & Cowan, P.A. (1990a). The "Who Does What?" In J. Touliatos, B.F. Perlmutter, & M. Straus (Eds.), Handbook of Family Measurement Techniques. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Cowan, C.P., & Cowan, P.A. (1990b). The Pie: A measure of role saliency. In J. Touliatos, B.F. Perlmutter, & M. Straus (Eds.), Handbook of Family Measurement Techniques. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Cowan, C.P. & Cowan, P.A. (1988). Who does what when partners become parents: Implications for men, women, and marriage. In R. Palkovitz & M.B. Sussman (Eds.), Transitions to Parenthood (pp. 105-132). New York: Haworth Press.
- Cowan, C.P., & Cowan, P.A. (1985). Couple Communication Questionnaire. Unpublished manuscript, University of California, Berkeley, CA.
- Demo, D.H., & Acock, A.C. (1993). Family diversity and the division of domestic labor: How much have things really changed? Family Relations, 42, 323-331.
- Gough, H. G., & Heilbrun, A.B., Jr. (1980). The Adjective Check List Manual. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Greenstein, T.N. (1996). Husbands' participation in domestic labor: Interactive effects of wives' and husbands' gender ideologies. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 58, 585-595.
- Locke, H. & Wallace, K. (1959). Short marital adjustment and prediction tests: Their reliability and validity. Marriage and Family Living, 21, 251-255.
- Schulz, M.S. (1994). Coping with negative emotional arousal: The daily spillover of work stress into marital interactions. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, CA.
- Thompson, L. & Walker, A.J. (1989). Gender in families: Women and men in marriage, work, and parenthood. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51, 845-871.

Table 1: Analyses of Variance: Gender Differences and Time Changes\*

Variables	Time F	Gender F	Time by Gender F
Family tasks division	.13	17.44***	.67
Equality of family tasks division	.68	4.14*	1.10
Ideal family tasks division	.42	7.35**	1.56
Satisfaction with family tasks division (difference score)	7.75***	6.09*	3.21*
Satisfaction with family tasks division (global)	.18	6.02*	.89
Conflict over family tasks division	.17	.01	1.25
Child tasks division	.14	14.42***	.12
Equality of child tasks division	.34	16.41***	1.56
Ideal child tasks division	3.74*	2.94	.15
Satisfaction with child tasks division (difference score)	3.33*	18.88***	.92
Satisfaction with child tasks division (global)	1.13	3.26	.10
Marital satisfaction	3.14*	1.58	.52
Total amount of marital conflict	.19	.57	.45

Table 2: Analyses of Variance: Psychological Role Involvement (the Pie)\*

Roles	Time F	Gender F	Time by Gender F
Parent	.56	14.65***	.41
Partner	.17	3.74	.32
Lover	.86	.50	.21
Housekeeper	4.13*	1.23	.15
Worker	1.43	17.38***	.58

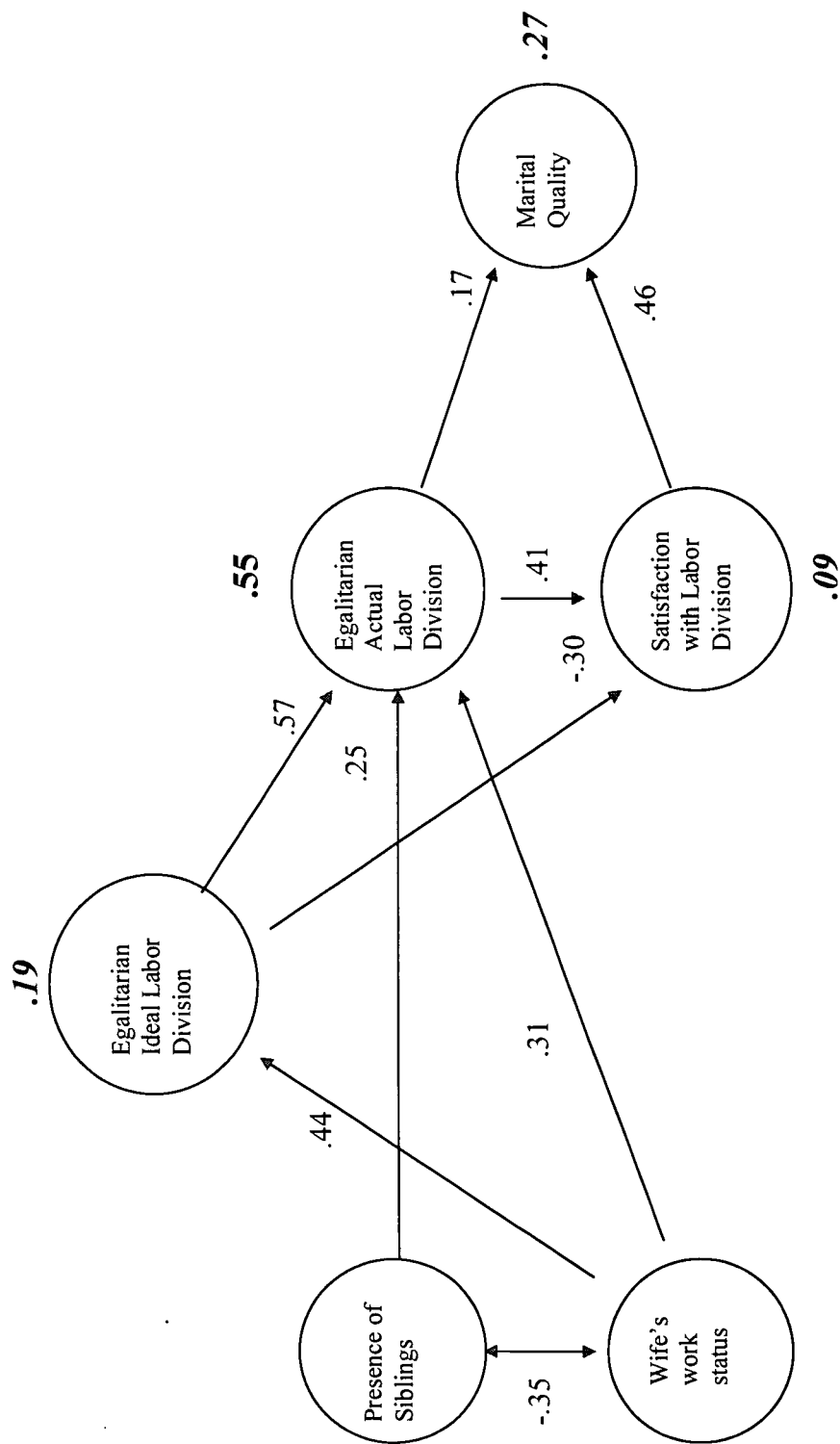
\*Covariates: Family Income, Wife's Relative Income, and Wife's Hours of Paid Employment.



**Table 3: Latent Variable Path Analysis with Partial Least Squares Component Loadings on Manifest Variables, Before and After Transition.**

Variable	Pre-Transition		Post-Transition	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
<b>Wife's Work Status</b>				
Work hours	.92	.93	.91	.91
Relative income	.90	.90	.91	.92
<b>Presence of younger siblings</b>	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
<b>Ideology</b>				
Husband's ideal involvement in household tasks	.65	.75	.83	.71
Husband's ideal involvement in childcare tasks	.93	.87	.87	.81
<b>Actual Labor division</b>				
Husband's involvement in household tasks	.78	.85	.72	.74
Husband's involvement in childcare tasks	.92	.84	.91	.90
<b>Satisfaction with labor division</b>				
Household tasks	.79	.92	.88	.87
Childcare tasks	.84	.91	.87	.90
<b>Marital quality</b>				
Amount of Conflict	-.84	-.85	-.96	-.88
Satisfaction	.87	.84	.71	.92

Figure 1. Path Model: Husbands Before Transition (RMS=.06)





U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)  
National Library of Education (NLE)  
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



# REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

## I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: <i>Who Does What, Why, and How It Affects Parental Relationships During Children's Transition to School.</i>	
Author(s): <i>Elina Alexandrova</i>	
Corporate Source:	Publication Date:

## II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents
<div>PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY  _____ Sample _____ TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)</div> <div>1</div>	<div>PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY  _____ Sample _____ TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)</div> <div>2A</div>	<div>PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY  _____ Sample _____ TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)</div> <div>2B</div>
Level 1 ↑ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Level 2A ↑ <input type="checkbox"/>	Level 2B ↑ <input type="checkbox"/>

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.  
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign  
here,→  
please

Signature: <i>Elina Alexandrova</i>	Printed Name/Position/Title: <i>Elina Alexandrova, graduate student</i>	
Organization/Address: <i>University of California, Berkeley Dep. of Psychology, 3210 Tolman, #1650 Berkeley, CA 94720-1650</i>	Telephone: <i>(510)642-2055</i>	FAX:
	E-Mail Address: <i>elina@socrates.berkeley.edu</i>	Date: <i>10/19/98</i>





**ERIC COUNSELING AND STUDENT SERVICES CLEARINGHOUSE**

201 Ferguson Building • University of North Carolina at Greensboro • PO Box 26171

Greensboro, NC 27402-6171 • 800/414.9769 • 336/334.4114 • FAX: 336/334.4116

e-mail: [ericcass@uncg.edu](mailto:ericcass@uncg.edu)

Dear 1998 APA Presenter:

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Student Services invites you to contribute to the ERIC database by providing us with a written copy of the presentation you made at the American Psychological Association's 106th Annual Convention in San Francisco August 14-18, 1998. Papers presented at professional conferences represent a significant source of educational material for the ERIC system. We don't charge a fee for adding a document to the ERIC database, and authors keep the copyrights.

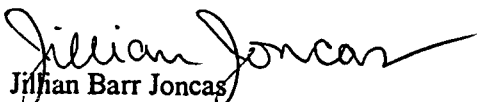
As you may know, ERIC is the largest and most searched education database in the world. Documents accepted by ERIC appear in the abstract journal Resources in Education (RIE) and are announced to several thousand organizations. The inclusion of your work makes it readily available to other researchers, counselors, and educators; provides a permanent archive; and enhances the quality of RIE. Your contribution will be accessible through the printed and electronic versions of RIE, through microfiche collections that are housed at libraries around the country and the world, and through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). By contributing your document to the ERIC system, you participate in building an international resource for educational information. In addition, your paper may listed for publication credit on your academic vita.

To submit your document to ERIC/CASS for review and possible inclusion in the ERIC database, please send the following to the address on this letterhead:

- (1) Two (2) laser print copies of the paper,
- (2) A signed reproduction release form (see back of letter), and
- (3) A 200-word abstract (optional)

Documents are reviewed for contribution to education, timeliness, relevance, methodology, effectiveness of presentation, and reproduction quality. Previously published materials in copyrighted journals or books are not usually accepted because of Copyright Law, but authors may later publish documents which have been acquired by ERIC. However, should you wish to publish your document with a scholarly journal in the future, please contact the appropriate journal editor prior to submitting your document to ERIC. It is possible that some editors will consider even a microfiche copy of your work as "published" and thus will not accept your submission. In the case of "draft" versions, or preliminary research in your area of expertise, it would be prudent to inquire as to what extent the percentage of duplication will effect future publication of your work. Finally, please feel free to copy the reproduction release for future or additional submissions.

Sincerely,

  
Julian Barr Joncas

Assistant Director for Acquisitions and Outreach

