

Men's Housework and Family Networks in Japanese Dual-Earner Marriages

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日本の共稼ぎ結婚における男性の家事と家族ネットワークについて

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Using a representative sample of married dual-earner couples in Japan, this study analyzes the conditions under which husbands contribute to household tasks conventionally performed by wives. Survey data are analyzed using regression procedures with husbands' involvement in housework (meal preparation, laundry, and bathroom clean-up) treated as a major dependent variable, and family networks, relative resources, practicality, ideology, and work environment treated as major explanatory variables. Although Japanese husbands' overall performance in these household tasks is minimal, I found that these men participate in routine housework more frequently if their family support networks are not readily available, if they are employed fewer hours, if they hold more egalitarian gender ideology, if their wives earn a larger share of the family income and the husband-wife age gap is greater, and if their wives' commuting hours are longer. Theoretical explanations for the observed findings are discussed and the directions for future research are suggested.

Keywords: Men's Housework, Family Networks, Dual-Earner Marriages

1. Introduction

In a study of twenty English families, Elizabeth Bott (1957) argued that conjugal role performance is largely a function of the configuration of relatives and friends associated with each spouse. Bott's research generated the hypothesis that conjugal role relations are linked to the existing social environment of each spouse. Couples with tight-knit networks are likely to have marriages with segregated roles, while those with loose-knit networks are likely to have joint roles. It is this linkage that Western researchers have repeatedly examined in the last three decades. Some researchers have found support for her hypothesis (e.g., Hill, 1988; Maryanski and Ishii-Kuntz, 1991; Turner, 1967) while others have not (e.g., Aldous and Strauss, 1966; Rogler and Procidano, 1986; Wellman and Wellman, 1992), leaving the validity of her core hypothesis still in question.

Given this controversy, I decided to examine Bott's hypothesis in a non-Occidental social environment where its cross-cultural applicability could be evaluated. Japanese society provides an ideal case study because traditionally both middle and working class couples have separate social networks and a marked division in marital roles. For example, Salamon (1974) reports that even among the college educated,

wives maintain college friendships while husbands acquire work-related friendships. In addition, women traditionally look to their female relatives for social support. A literature review of Japanese family life reveals that it is typical for each spouse to have non-overlapping household and child care tasks (Ishii-Kuntz, 1993, 1994; Kato, Ishii-Kuntz, Makino and Tsuchiya, 1998). This strict division is frequently attributed to early socialization of gender-segregated norms where boys and girls are assigned different domestic chores and activities (Ishii-Kuntz, 1990, 1996). However, recent family literature and data do suggest that joint domestic duties and parental care are becoming more frequent in Japan than in past generations (Ohta, 1999; Tajiri, 1990).

This swing towards joint conjugal roles does not mean that Japanese couples are suddenly becoming more egalitarian than their older counterparts. Traditional gender-role socialization is still the rule in Japanese society (Bando, 1986; Ishii-Kuntz, 1990, 1992) and, it cannot be simply explained away by normative changes in socialization practices. Instead, structural and demographic changes in Japanese families after World War II that, in essence, increased the number of nuclear families over the more traditional extended families, provide an alternative explanation. While the proportion of Japanese families described as nuclear is 60% in 1920, 63% in 1950, 75% in 1980, and 79% in 1995, this mode is most evident in urban areas (Japanese Statistical Yearbook, 1997). In turn, these alterations in family composition have influenced to a yet unknown degree the social networks of married individuals.

The purpose of my research is to examine how Japanese couples categorize their positions in social networks and to consider how these processes affect their conjugal role relationships. In particular, I focus on husbands' contribution to housework and how it is influenced by the family networks. Additionally, I examine various factors that have been found to influence the degree of men's participation in housework: relative resources, practicality, gender ideology, and work environment. This paper is divided into three parts: (1) a review of marital relationships and men's housework in Japan and the U.S.; (2) analyses of the 1998 National Family Research (NFR98) data collected in Japan; and (3) implications of my study for future directions of research on networks and husbands' involvement in housework.

2. Marital Relations in Contemporary Japan

The sociological and anthropological literature reports that Japanese couples rarely socialize together (e.g., Allison, 1994; Atsumi, 1979; Imamura, 1987). Husbands spend their waking hours at work or with colleagues, and wives spend their time with their children, relatives or female friends. For example, Atsumi (1979) finds that Japanese husbands socialize mostly with colleagues during and after work hours, in part because career success is seen to depend upon high visibility and maintaining affable work relationships. In addition, these men face "tsukiai" (socializing) pressures from their bosses and co-workers when they are asked for after work-hour entertainment. Allison (1994), for example, places great

emphasis on this “male-bonding” ritual in the reproduction of a “corporate masculinity.” Atsumi (1979) also describes the obligation to engage in frequent after-hours socializing in corporate workplaces. Wives, in contrast, continue to socialize mostly with relatives, siblings, parents of their children’s friends, and neighborhood friends. As a “gatekeeper” for the family (Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane, 1992a), wives are also faced with subtle pressure from their relatives and friends to maintain close contacts with them.

While this compartmentalization of both economic and social activities has been the mode of Japanese marriages for centuries (Reischauer, 1981), some recent changes in attitude suggest that the nuclear family is undergoing alternations in role allocation. In government, for example, Japanese officials are showing interest in strengthening men’s involvement with their families (Management and Coordination Agency, 1990; Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2000), in part, because of a decline in birth rate, an increasing rate of truancy and criminal behaviors among children and mental health problems among Japanese housewives that are often attributed to absentee fathers. For example, educational programs in urban areas are now encouraging fathers to get more involved with their children. Such programs include prenatal classes offered for expectant fathers in several cities (Ishii-Kuntz, 1996). In addition, Ishii-Kuntz (1989) suggests that Japanese institutions are now generating more individualistic values because of the workplace restructuring that emphasizes individual as opposed to collectivistic productivity, which, in turn, reduces adherence to traditional ones. This trend is especially seen among younger, upwardly mobile parents with more education and an urban background who may be shifting away from traditional Japanese roles and values (Ishii-Kuntz, 1989; Naoi and Schooler, 1990). Thus, ideological and psychological forces for change are now impinging upon the Japanese family, with these new attitudes surely influencing both the expectations and performance of conjugal roles. Given these trends, I wanted to see to what degree the immediate social environment might also be affecting the choices made by individual couples, and, in turn, to be a factor in the emerging variations in Japanese conjugal role relations.

3. Men’s Housework

Previous studies repeatedly show that wives perform the major portion of the total household labor in most Japanese and American homes (e.g., Coltrane and Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Ishii-Kuntz, 1996; Nishioka, 1997). Domestic tasks tend to be divided according to gender, with women performing most of the daily repetitive and routine indoor tasks, including almost all of the cooking, cleaning, and child care. Men, by contrast, tend to contribute to household labor by taking out trash, maintaining cars, or playing with children (Berk, 1985; Coltrane and Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Kamo, 1988; Thompson and Walker, 1989). Although aggregate changes have been small (Miller and Garrison, 1982), recent research using representative samples indicates that some men are making greater contributions to household tasks

previously considered “women’s work” (Ferree, 1991). Primarily because employed women are contributing significantly fewer hours to household labor, men’s proportionate contributions to household tasks are on the rise (Pleck, 1983).

The general middle-range theories have been used to explain the allocation of household labor: (1) Relative Resources; (2) Practicality; and (3) Ideology (see Coltrane and Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane, 1992a, 1992b; Kamo, 1988; Pleck 1983; Spitze, 1988). *Relative resources* are usually measured by comparing spouses’ earnings, educational level, or occupational prestige. Relying on gender-neutral exchange or equity models of household labor allocation, such theories assume that housework is an undesirable activity to be avoided and that the person with more outside resources will have more marital power and hence do less household work. *Practicality* explanations, like relative resource models, assume that couples maximize utility through gender-neutral labor allocation strategies. Couples are assumed to meet household labor demands by assigning tasks to the person with the most available time. Available or “free” time is usually measured in relation to market labor – being employed or the number of hours employed per week. Another part of the practicality factor, the size of the total household work-load, is usually operationalized by the presence of children, with more children assumed to increase the overall level of domestic work. *Ideology* is usually measured by respondents’ attitudes toward appropriate family roles for men and women. Theories of household labor allocation stressing ideology assume that individual preferences to perform various household chores reflect adult or childhood gender socialization. Most explanations posit conventional values as preceding and limiting the sharing of household tasks. Some versions, however, reverse the causal order and suggest that gender itself is constructed through the performance of gender-typed household tasks (West and Zimmerman, 1987).

Hypotheses derived from all three theories of household labor allocation have received partial support in past research on representative samples. Nevertheless, results have been contradictory and a relatively small portion of the variance in men’s assumption of household work has been explained (see Ferree, 1990; Thompson and Walker, 1989). In this paper, I examine these factors as they influence Japanese men’s participation in housework in addition to the relationship between family networks and men’s housework.

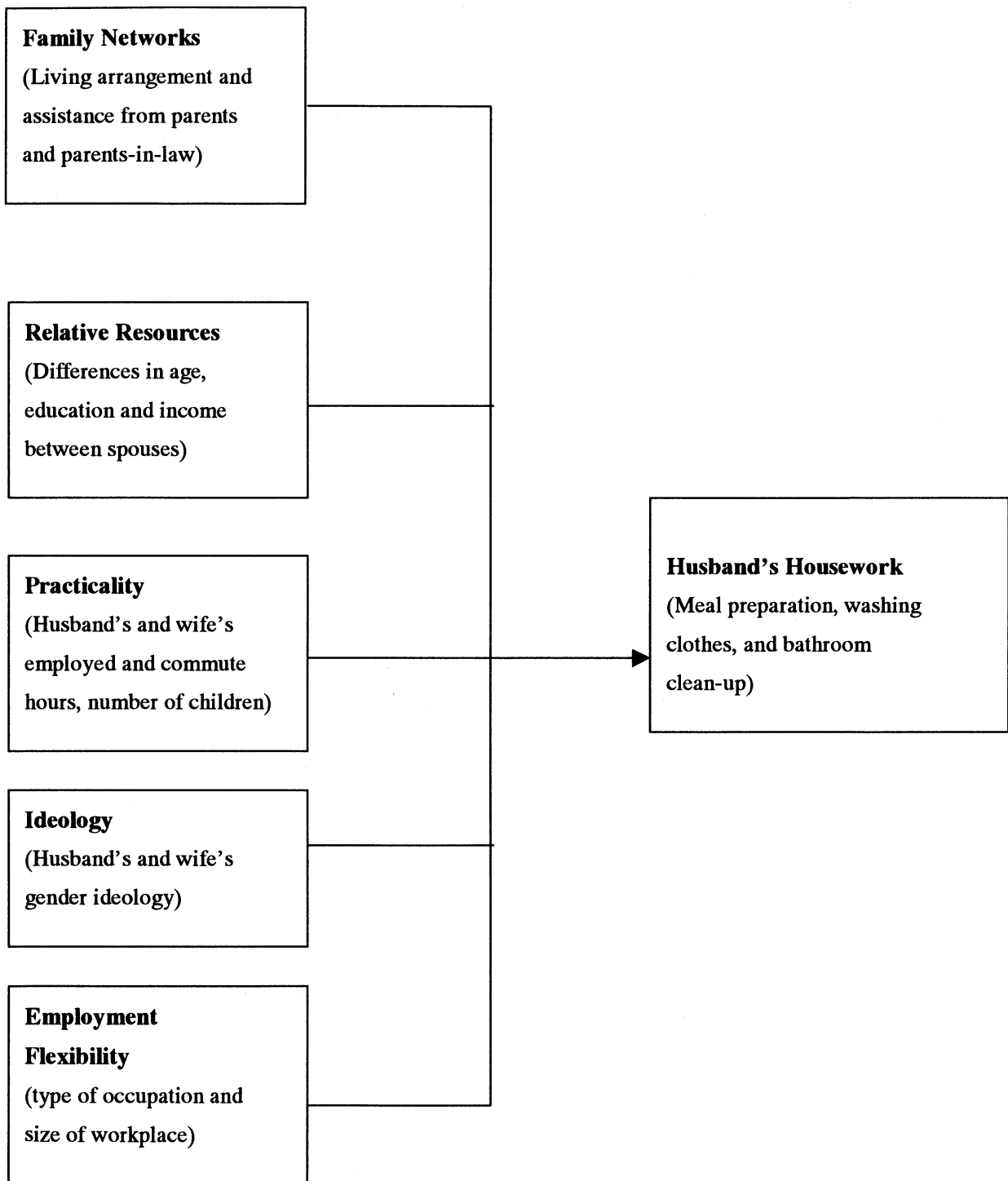
One of the factors in household allocation that has received relatively little attention is the work environment. This paper focuses on married Japanese dual-earner couples, thus the flexibility of each spouse’s workplace can be examined. In terms of child care, we know that the types of occupation and the size of operations explain the degree of flexibility for men to take child care hours and/or leave (Ishii-Kuntz, 1996). Using qualitative data on Japanese “child caring” men, Ishii-Kuntz (1996, in press) illustrated that men who hold more flexible jobs (e.g., professional as opposed to sales or clerical work) and men who work for larger companies are more likely to have a father-friendly work environment,

which, in turn, makes it relatively easy for them to take child care hours and/or leave. Assuming that a similar relationship would hold between work flexibility and men's participation in housework, I assume that civil workers and professionals have a more flexible work environment compared to those who work in marketing and clerical divisions. Additionally, it can be predicted that since the workload can be shared with or substituted by other employees, the larger workplace provides more flexibility for workers. Thus the larger workplace is assumed to have a more family-friendly atmosphere, which, in turn, may encourage men's participation family work including household labor.

4. Modeling Men's Contribution to Housework

The proposed model of husbands' participation in housework among married dual-earner couples that includes a variety of factors is presented in Figure 1. Consistent with previous studies (Coltrane and Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane, 1992a, 1992b; Nishioka, 1997), I include the major explanatory concepts: family networks (presence and assistance of mothers and mothers-in-law); relative resources (age, education and earnings); practicality (time availability and household labor demands); ideology (attitudes toward gender roles); and employment flexibility. It is hypothesized that men's increased participation in housework is associated with having less extensive family networks, husbands and wives having a similar level of resources, husbands' greater and wives' less time availability at home, more household demands, husbands and wives having more egalitarian attitudes toward gender roles, and couples having more flexible work environments.

Figure 1. Predictors of Husband's Housework



5. Methods

(1) Sample

The data used in this study come from the National Family Research (NFR98) conducted in 1998 by the National Family Research Committee of Japan Society of Family Sociology (Watanabe and Ishihara, 2000). The respondents for this survey, adult household members ages between 28 and 77 (as of October 1998), were selected by a two-stage stratified probability-proportional-to-size sampling. Using the Principal Resident Registrar for 502 districts and the Voter Registration List for 33 districts, 10,500 household members (5,163 men and 5,337 women) were extracted from 535 Census districts. The self-administered questionnaire survey was hand-delivered to each potential respondent and was later collected directly by the canvassers. The total of 6,985 (3,323 men and 3,662 women) responses was obtained with the corresponding response rates of 66.5% (total), 64.4% (men), and 68.6% (women). The data set provides a rich source of information on many aspects of Japanese family life. The subsample used for the present investigation consists of all married respondents living in dual-earner households (N=2,663).

(2) Measurement

Men's housework: Three tasks were used to measure husband's participation in housework: preparing meals, washing clothes, and cleaning the bathroom. Because I am interested in potential changes in the gender-based allocation of housework, my primary dependent variable of husband's housework includes the most repetitive and/or time-consuming tasks that are traditionally performed by wives. The extent of husband's participation in these tasks was measured by a five-point scale ranging from "rarely" to "almost daily" performance of these tasks. Cronbach's alpha for the summed housework measure was 0.65 for the household labor measure. The summed scale ranged from 3 to 15 with higher scores indicating husband's greater participation in housework.

Family networks: The extent of respondents' embeddedness in family networks was measured using four items; the physical proximity between respondents and their mothers and mothers-in-law, and the level of assistance from parents and parents-in-law. The inclusion of mothers and mothers-in-law rather than other family members such as fathers, fathers-in-law, and sibling for the first two items was based on the assumption that maternal presence has played a significant role in providing household assistance for their adult children in Japanese families. Of the four items, the first two asked the respondents' physical proximity from their mothers and mothers-in-law. A six-point scale for these items ranged from mothers (or mothers-in-law) living (1) together to (6) more than 3 hours away (one-way). Two other measures concern the extent of non-financial assistance that the respondents received from parents and parents-in-law. Four-point scale for these measures ranged from (1) mutual assistance to (4) no assistance given or received.

Relative resources: Resources that the wife possesses relative to those of the husband were measured by the differences of wife's and husband's ages, educational level, and earnings. Chronological age difference between husbands and wives was reclassified into five categories including husbands being (1) five or more years older, (2) 3-4 years older, (3) 1-2 year(s) older, (4) same age as wives, and (5) younger than wives. Since seniority is an important concept in Japanese society, higher scores for this variable indicate that wives possess more relative age resources than their husbands. The second variable, educational resources of the wife, was measured by subtracting the husband's educational attainment (i.e., categories of highest school completed) from that of wives. Recategorization included husbands (1) having three or more categories of higher educational attainment, (2) 1-2 more categories of higher educational attainment, (3) the same level of educational attainment, and (4) wives having higher level of educational attainment. Higher scores indicate that wives possess more educational resources compared to their husbands. Finally, the difference in husbands' and wives' earnings was computed by subtracting wife's income categories from those of husband's. It was then reclassified into seven categories with husbands (1) reporting more than nine categories higher income than wives, (2) 7-8 categories, (3) 5-6 categories, (4) 3-4 categories, (5) 1-2 categories, (6) the same categories, and (7) wives reporting higher categories of income than husbands. Higher scores for this variable indicate that wives possess more relative economic resources than their husbands. The correlation between relative economic and educational resources is .334 and .159 for husbands and wives, respectively, indicating that multicollinearity is not a problem in this analysis.

Practicality: Five variables measured time availability and potential demand for household labor: husbands' and wives' employment and commuting hours, and the number of children in the household. Hours of employment were assessed by asking how many hours a day the respondent worked for pay. Hours of commuting were similarly assessed by asking how many hours (minutes) a day the respondent spent commuting one-way to paid work. Assuming that the more children in the household implies a greater demand for housework, number of respondent's children was also included.

Ideology: Gender traditionalism was assessed using one survey question. The respondents were asked for the extent of agreement/disagreement with the following statement, "Men should work outside and women should take care of the family." Higher scores on this item indicate more liberal attitudes toward gender and family roles.

Work environment: Assuming that certain types of jobs and the size of the workplace provide various degrees of flexibility, which, in turn, have a direct impact on men's participation in housework, two variables are used to measure the flexibility of the respondents' workplace: types of occupation and the size of the workplace. Types of jobs were reclassified into (1) management and sales, (2) clerical, and (3) professional, skilled labor, and agriculture/fishing with the higher scored jobs indicating more flexibility

in terms of work schedule. The number of coworkers was assessed by a 7-point scale ranging from (1) 1-9 to (7) government agencies in which a large number of coworkers is present.

(3) Analytic Strategy

The first part of the analysis examines sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents included in the subsample. In addition, descriptive characteristics of the key variables used in this study will be examined. The second part of the analysis investigates the impact of family networks, relative resources, practicality, ideology, and work environment on men's participation in housework. Because I am interested in gender-based divisions, the regression analysis will focus on routine housework rather than on total household labor.

6. Results

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents. The average ages of sample men (51.3) and women (51.5) are similar. They have been married, on average, for 22 years, and the average household consists of four people. Men in the sample reported higher educational attainment than women. While one fourth of men completed four-year colleges, only 6% of women reported comparable educational attainment. Instead, the majority of women completed either junior high school or high school (70.6%). With respect to occupation, while a similar proportion of men and women have professional jobs (14.4% and 13.4% for men and women, respectively), women are more likely to be represented in clerical, sales and service positions. On the other hand, men are more likely to be skilled laborers compared to women. As predicted, women's earnings are much lower than those of men. More than one third of sample women reported their annual earnings of 1,000,000 yen (\$9,523) to 1,290,000 yen (\$12,285). In contrast, the majority of their male counterparts (53%) reported earnings between 2,000,000 yen (\$19,000) and 5,990,000 yen (\$57,000). Women's lower earnings may be due to the prevalence of part-time job holders. Interestingly, 21.3% of women reported no income although they are employed. This discrepancy may be due to the way the income question was addressed. That is, the respondents were asked to circle the "closest" income category with the two lowest categories of "none" and "less than 1,000,000 yen (\$9,523)". If women respondents were earning much closer to "none" category rather than "less than 1,000,000 yen" category they may have been prone to respond to the lowest category. Since actual amount of income was not assessed, it is not possible to examine if this speculation would hold.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of Sample Respondents

Variable	%	Mean	Standard Deviation
Male	47.20		
Husband's age		51.31	13.59
Wife's age		51.49	13.69
Length of marriage		22.40	10.65
Number in household		3.98	1.46
Husband's education (Wife's education)		2.74 (2.33)	1.55 (1.21)
Junior High School	23.3 (25.8)		
High School	39.7 (44.8)		
Vocational School	4.0 (6.8)		
Junior College	6.4 (16.2)		
University	25.9 (5.9)		
Others	0.8 (0.4)		
Husband's occupation (Wife's occupation)			
Professional	14.4 (13.4)		
Managerial	12.6 (1.2)		
Clerical	14.7 (26.9)		
Sales & Service	14.8 (31.5)		
Skilled Labor	38.1 (21.9)		
Agriculture/Fishing	5.3 (4.9)		
Husband's income (Wife's income)		5.87 (1.81)	2.96 (1.80)
None	1.4 (21.3)		
Less than 1,000,000 Yen	4.7 (35.3)		
1,000,000 – 1,290,000 Yen	3.1 (9.4)		
1,300,000 – 1,990,000 Yen	5.3 (9.5)		
2,000,000 – 3,990,000 Yen	27.1 (15.4)		
4,000,000 – 5,990,000 Yen	25.9 (5.6)		
6,000,000 – 7,990,000 Yen	16.3 (2.0)		
8,000,000 – 9,990,000 Yen	8.7 (0.9)		
10,000,000 – 11,990,000 Yen	3.7 (0.2)		
More than 12,000,000 Yen	3.8 (0.5)		

Table 2 reports the means for the major variables used in this study. Consistent with previous research, husband's absolute contributions to housework are modest, i.e., many of them participate in housework only "rarely" or "once a week." In terms of family networks, mothers and mothers-in-law, on average, reside within "walking" or "less than one-hour" distance away from the respondents. Respondents also report either "giving" or "receiving" non-financial assistance to or from their parents and parents-in-laws indicating that a majority of respondents are engaged in a mutually helping relationships with them. Husbands and wives are, on average, 1-2 or 3-4 years apart with respect to their ages. On the average, husbands reported higher income and educational attainment than their wives. Husbands work an average of 9 hours a day and spend approximately 26 minutes commuting to work. Wives, on the other hand, work an average of 7 hours a day with the commuting time of 16 minutes. Respondents, on average, have two children. Although the levels of husbands' and wives' gender ideology are similar, husbands tended to have a slightly more traditional ideology than wives. On the average, respondents had 10 to 99 coworkers.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations for the Key Variables

Variables (Range)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Husband's participation in housework (3-15)	4.37	2.23
Living arrangement (mother) (1-6)	3.66	1.64
Living arrangement (mother-in-law) (1-6)	3.65	1.64
Assistance from parent (1-5)	2.71	1.28
Assistance from parent-in-law (1-5)	3.01	1.24
Age difference (1-5)	2.60	1.34
Difference in income (1-7)	4.44	1.16
Difference in educational attainment (1-4)	2.75	0.85
Husband's daily employed hours	9.01	1.83
Husband's daily commuting hours (one-way)	0.43	0.42
Wife's daily employed hours	6.88	2.14
Wife's daily commuting hours (one-way)	0.27	0.30
Number of children	2.21	0.74
Husband's gender ideology (1-4)	2.58	1.03
Wife's gender ideology (1-4)	2.87	0.99
Employment flexibility (1-3)	2.15	0.89
Employment size (1-7)	2.40	1.76

Table 3 reports the results of multiple regression analysis that explores the effects of family networks, relative resources, practicality, gender ideology, and employment environment on men's housework. When the effects of all independent variables are simultaneously accounted for, living arrangement of mothers and mothers-in-law, spouses' age and income differences, husbands' employment hours, wives' commuting hours, and husbands' gender ideology all make significant contributions to variation in husbands' participation in housework ($R^2 = .07$).

Husbands' participation in routine housework is significantly higher when (a) their mothers live farther away from them, (b) their mothers-in-law live farther away from them, (c) they are older than their wives, (d) their wives earn a larger share of the family income, (e) they are employed less hours, (f) their wives spend longer hours commuting to work, and (g) they hold less traditional values. In summary, except for work environment, each hypothesis received partial support from these data. For family networks, it is not the exchange of assistance between parents and children, but rather the residential proximity of mothers and mothers-in-law that significantly influences the degree of husbands' participation in housework. As for relative resources, a similarity in earnings between husbands and wives rather than educational attainment is found to have a significant impact on men's involvement in housework. Interestingly, the husbands who are older than their wives are found to do more housework than those whose ages are similar to their wives. The previous research reported older fathers doing more child care, which, in turn, increased the amount of their housework (Coltrane and Ishii-Kuntz, 1992). It is thus speculated that older husbands either are participating or have participated in child care more frequently, which, then resulted in their greater involvement in housework. Turning to practicality hypothesis, husbands' work hours and wives' commuting hours significantly increase husbands' housework. It is also husbands' attitudes toward gender roles but not of wives' that affect the extent of husbands' housework participation.

Table 3. The Effects of the Independent Variables on Husband's Housework

Independent Variables	Husband's Hours of Housework
Family networks	
Living arrangement (mother)	.008 (.074)***
Living arrangement (mother-in-law)	.009 (.078)***
Assistance from parent	-.0001 (-.001)
Assistance from parent-in-law	-.006 (-.040)
Relative resources	
Age difference	-.009 (-.057)**
Difference in income	.268 (.144)***
Difference in educational attainment	-.009 (-.034)
Practicality	
Husband's daily employed hours	-.005 (-.041)*
Husband's daily commuting hours	-.143 (-.028)
Wife's daily employed hours	.003 (.025)
Wife's daily commuting hours	.625 (.088)***
Number of children	.005 (.026)
Ideology	
Husband's gender ideology	.249 (.119)***
Wife's gender ideology	-.0008 (-.004)
Employment environment	
Employment flexibility	-.002 (-.014)
Employment size	.003 (.034)
R ²	.070
Adjusted R ²	.064
N	2,663

NOTE: Standardized coefficients are in parentheses.

*p≤.05; **p≤.01; ***p≤.001.

7. Discussion

The analyses in the current study used a representative sample of Japanese household members to explore the degree of men's participation in housework. In particular, I focused on Japanese married and dual-earner couples in order to examine the relationship between family- and work-related factors and men's housework. All major theoretical explanations for variation in husbands' share of housework received at least partial support in this analysis. This suggests that men's involvement in housework is the result of multiple causal forces. The extent of men's housework participation is shaped by family networks, relative resources, practicality, and gender ideology. These four factors are so intertwined and mutually reinforcing that it would be unusual to discover a lack of reciprocity between them. Nevertheless, it is important to isolate the effects of these factors under which men are encouraged to participate in activities that have traditionally been defined as "women's."

Overall, the results of the Japanese data suggest a couple of important observations concerning men's participation in housework. First, with respect to family networks, this research has hopefully shown that Bott's network theory has some utility for understanding variations in Japanese men's contribution to housework. It is not only applicable to Western cultures which value the ideal of the private family (Cheal, 1991) but it can be used to partially explain the Japanese family system which is typified as one with lots of boundary ambiguity (Ishii-Kuntz and Maryanski, 2000). The cross-cultural utility of Bott's theory is largely due to its emphasis on the structure of personal networks rather than on the attitudinal factors which may vary from one culture to another. Of the family network factors, only the structural variables such as living arrangement of mothers and mothers-in-law are found to significantly affect men's housework participation. The importance of family structures rather than attitudes which was found in this study is consistent with Bott's emphasis on network structures. Furthermore, it is believed that this approach is useful in explaining the emerging egalitarian trend among younger Japanese couples who frequently share housework and child care (Ishii-Kuntz, 1996, in press). Second, my findings show that factors associated with husbands are particularly important to explain their contribution to housework. Men who work longer hours are less likely to do housework. At the same time, men's egalitarian attitudes about appropriate gender and family roles are likely to increase their participation in housework. Taken together, these findings suggest that the husbands' initiatives in reducing their work hours and changing attitudes toward gender roles are prerequisite to facilitate their participation in housework. Third, my findings suggest that time availability has gender-based impact on men's housework contribution. That is, for husbands, it is their longer work hours that reduce the frequency of their housework but wives' employment hours have little impact on their spouses' housework participation. Rather, it is wives' longer commuting hours that are found to increase husbands' housework involvement. It can be speculated that longer commuting hours of wives may mean that these wives are more career-oriented since many

Japanese women's part-time jobs are likely to be located near their residence. Therefore, wives' longer commuting hours may affect husbands' participation in housework via the career orientation of wives' employment.

The NFR98 data suggest several additional observations that should be noted for future research. First, it is important to examine men's participation by utilizing several family- and work-related factors. Among familial factors, we need to continue to monitor the impact of family networks, relative resources, practicality, and gender ideology on men's housework. However, the next step should involve more extensive examination of husbands' and wives' separate social networks. My analyses did not reveal a significant impact of work environment on men's housework. This may be due to the fact that only two modestly and indirectly related employment variables were included in the analyses. In a qualitative study on Japanese men who share child care and housework with their wives, Ishii-Kuntz (1996, in press) found that the father-friendly atmosphere of the workplace plays one of the most important roles in encouraging fathers' participation in child care and housework. It is thus important, particularly in a study of Japanese men's participation in housework, to expand work-related variables to examine the more direct effects of workplace factors. In addition, while the focus of this investigation was on men's housework contribution, it is equally important to study how men's involvement with young children – an increasingly prevalent phenomenon in Japan – is associated with various factors included in this study.

Notes

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岩井紀子編

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