

Examining Family Role and Authority Patterns: Two Methodological Issues*

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Based on a study of 120 United States households, two methodological issues underlying research concerning family role and authority are examined: incongruency in husband-wife responses and coherence of authority patterns across a range of family decisions and tasks. The findings suggest that: (1) question ambiguity is a major source of incongruity in husband-wife response, and that greater attention should be directed towards developing less ambiguous measures of authority; (2) most families do not have clearcut, consistent patterns of authority across different areas, and that investigation of authority patterns should first be conducted relative to specific areas of family life, rather than developing overall authority measures aggregating across areas.

In recent years increasing concern has been shown with the conceptual and methodological problems underlying the study of family authority and role patterns (Davis, 1970; Davis and Rigaux, 1974; Dunsing and Hafstrom, 1975; Olson and Cromwell, 1975; Olson and Rabunsky, 1972; Turk and Bell, 1972). It has been suggested that lack of attention to these problems in the past (Safilios-Rothschild, 1970) has seriously limited the extent to which the findings of different studies can be compared and integrated into a coherent body of knowledge. Two issues which have attracted much discussion relate to: (1) incongruency in response of different household members; (2) the appropriate conceptualization and measures of family authority and role patterns.

Incongruency in Responses

Incongruency is an important consideration

*This research was in part supported by Down Communication Ltd.

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insofar as it affects research findings. In other words, if different family members give identical or congruent responses, the wife, husband or child can equally well serve as respondent. If, on the other hand, responses are not congruent, the choice of respondent becomes critical. Inadequate attention is often paid to this issue and its implications. As has been pointed out (Safilios-Rothschild, 1969), much of our knowledge concerning family role and authority patterns is based on the responses of one spouse, generally the wife, since she is the most readily available. Nonetheless, the increasing number of studies in which responses are obtained from both spouses reveal a fair degree of incongruity (Brown and Rutter, 1966; Burchinal and Bauder, 1965; Buric and Zecevic, 1967; Davis, 1970; Davis and Rigaux, 1974; Ferber, 1955; Granbois and Willett, 1970; Granbois and Summers, 1975; Heer, 1962; Larson 1974; Munsinger, Weber and Hansen, 1975; Olson and Rabunsky, 1972; Safilios-Rothschild, 1969; Scanzoni, 1965; Turk and Bell, 1972; Van Es and Shingi, 1972; Wilkening and Morrison, 1963).

Discrepancies at the aggregate level (i.e., between all husbands and all wives) are typically found to be slight, although discrepancies in responses of husband and

wife pairs are more significant. Such discrepancies are found in 10-15 percent of couples depending on the type of question or decision. This has led some to conclude that observed incongruency is largely a result of random measurement error associated with the responses of two observers of the same phenomenon (Davis, 1970; Granbois and Willett, 1970), and of the use of self-report measures to identify family role patterns. Discrepancies may thus arise as a result of question ambiguity concerning the area of authority or the decisions or tasks concerned; or of difficulty in recalling decisions made in the past; or in identifying who actually is responsible when mutual consultation or involvement takes place; or from differences between spouses in awareness and information regarding an authority area (Olson and Cromwell, 1975).

Others have drawn attention to evidence that responses of both husbands and wives reflect the influence of socially prescribed norms concerning sex roles (Heer, 1962; Larson, 1974; Munsinger, Weber, and Hansen, 1975; Olson and Rabunsky, 1972; Turk and Bell, 1972; Van Es and Shingi, 1972) and suggest that these are important factors underlying incongruence. Traditional sex roles will thus exercise a "pull" effect, resulting in high levels of agreement in sex-typed decision and task areas, and tendencies to move towards a "central" position or a more egalitarian view of roles (Larson, 1974; Turk and Bell, 1972). Findings relating to different decisions and tasks are, however, often conflicting and inconclusive. Some studies find modesty biases predominant (Ferber, 1955; Heer, 1962; Turk and Bell, 1972), others find this true of vanity biases (Burchinal and Bauder, 1965; Buric and Zecevic, 1967; Olson, 1969). Sometimes both types of biases are found equally (Davis and Rigaux, 1974; Granbois and Willett, 1970; Larson, 1974; Shuptrine and Samuelson, 1976). The existence of such incongruency does raise doubts, nonetheless, concerning the reliability of self-report measures and the biases likely to be inherent in studies based on reports of one or the other spouse.

The Conceptualization of Role and Authority Patterns

A second issue concerns the conceptualization and measurement of role and authority

patterns. In many studies, following the procedure used by Blood and Wolfe (1960), an overall measure of family power and authority is developed by aggregating husband and wife influence or responsibility scores across a range of decision and activity areas. The appropriateness of this procedure has been questioned on conceptual and methodological grounds (Cromwell and Olson, 1975b; Heer, 1963; Olson and Rabunsky, 1972; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970; Sprey, 1975; Turk, 1975).

This procedure assumes that the dominant authority structure within a family can be deduced from the way in which decision-making responsibility is allocated, or from the "outcomes" of that authority structure (Cromwell and Olson, 1975a; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970; Sprey, 1975). As has been observed (Sprey, 1975), the tie between authority and decision-outcomes has yet to be demonstrated and there is reason to doubt that it exists. Family authority and decision-making appear likely to function as a dynamic interactive system, involving mutual give and take among family members (Bahr and Rollins, 1971; Cromwell and Olson, 1975b; Larson, 1974; Olson and Rabunsky, 1972). Consequently, decision-making patterns may reflect the specific interests, involvements and time constraints of each spouse, rather than an explicit "family authority" structure (Blood and Hamblin, 1958; Heer, 1958, 1963; Sprey, 1975).

Aggregation across decision areas also requires that role patterns or decision-making authority relating to specific areas of responsibility be linked in some systematic and consistent way to "overall" family authority. A test of the internal consistency of the Blood and Wolfe global measures (Bahr, 1973) suggests that the questions included tap the same dimension of authority. On the other hand, examination of the relationship between this and other global measures of family authority and roles and influence in successive aspects of the decision-making process, typically finds little or, at best, weak links (Davis, 1971; Olson and Rabunsky, 1972; Turk and Bell, 1972; Wilkes, 1975). Consequently, it is by no means clear how global and more specific measures of authority or influence are related, and whether or not the "influence" score developed for a given household will be the

same if different decisions or areas of family life are examined.

When aggregating, the weight to be assigned to each decision area raises further problems (Heer, 1963). Generally, equal weight is given to each statement. Certain decision areas or statements may, however, be more crucial to family authority than others: for example, choice of vacations, or entertainment. Also, families or spouses may differ in the significance they attach to authority in various areas, due to differences in individual and family goals and objectives, or in the way in which the decision is embedded in family life (Turk, 1975; Wilkening and Bharadwaj, 1967). Consequently, assigning authority to one or the other spouse in a given area, may not carry similar implications as to the overall balance of family authority.

Such issues suggest that further scrutiny is required of the assumptions upon which the study of family role and authority patterns are commonly based. In particular, analysis of individual household units, and of individual family differences with regard to role patterns across a variety of areas of involvement merits attention.

The study presented here is concerned with two principal questions: (1) to what extent are husband and wife responses congruent in relation to different types of decisions and activities; and (2) can households be meaningfully characterized in terms of dominant authority and role patterns across decision areas and tasks? The data are drawn from a study of the allocation of responsibility for 18 family decisions and 13 tasks among 120 U.S. families. The data base and research methodology will be presented briefly, followed by a discussion of the findings related to the two principal research questions. Finally, a number of conclusions are drawn concerning directions for future research.

THE RESEARCH APPROACH

The Data Base

The data base for the study consists of husband and wife questionnaires administered separately by personal interview to each spouse. Approximately 20 couples were interviewed in six metropolitan areas (totalling 240 respondents): Atlanta, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Portland (Oregon),

St. Louis, and Toledo (Ohio). In view of the small sample size necessitated by budget constraints, and the difficulty and costs of interviewing both spouses, the couples were selected on a "convenience" or self-recruitment basis by professional interviewers.¹

Half of the families had working wives, and half had nonworking wives. The couples also came from a range of different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, educational levels, and age groups. Influence on responsibility for 18 decision areas and 13 tasks, representing a wide range of family consumption activities, was measured by means of a 5-point scale ranging from "exclusively made by me," "mainly made by me," through "made equally by spouse and self," to "mainly" and "exclusively made by spouse."² These 18 decision areas and 13 tasks are listed in Table 1. In addition, data were collected on 14 demographic variables as well as 85 life-style characteristics, related to attitudes toward marital and sex roles and other personality characteristics.

The Plan of Analysis

Following the two principal research questions, the data were analyzed in two phases. In the first phase, the congruence of husband-wife responses was examined. Similarities and differences between husbands' and wives' perceptions in the overall patterning of family decision-making and task allocation were investigated, followed by an examination of discrepancies relative to specific decisions and tasks between all husbands and all wives and between each husband/wife pair. The steps followed in this analysis are shown in Figure 1.

In the second phase, along the lines of previous research, two different procedures

¹The purpose of the study was primarily to investigate methodological issues in the study of family role patterns and, consequently, sample size and absence of probability sampling were considered less critical than if the objective were to draw substantive conclusions. A check on the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the sample suggested a relatively high socioeconomic status but no other major discrepancies.

²For the 18 decisions, respondents were asked "to indicate your appraisal of the degree to which you (versus your spouse) are likely to influence the choice of _____." For the 13 activities, respondents were asked "to indicate the degree to which each activity is performed by you, your spouse, or both."

FIGURE 1. PLAN OF ANALYSIS (A) DETERMINING THE CONGRUENCE OF HUSBAND-WIFE ROLE DOMINANCE PATTERNS FOR THE DECISIONS AND TASKS

(a) aggregate level analysis

(b) individual level analysis

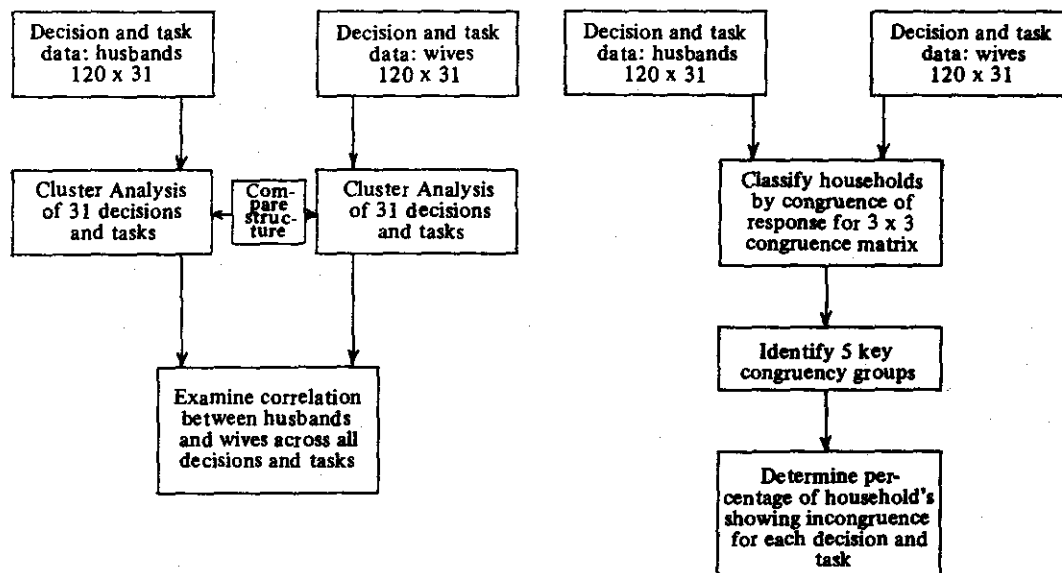
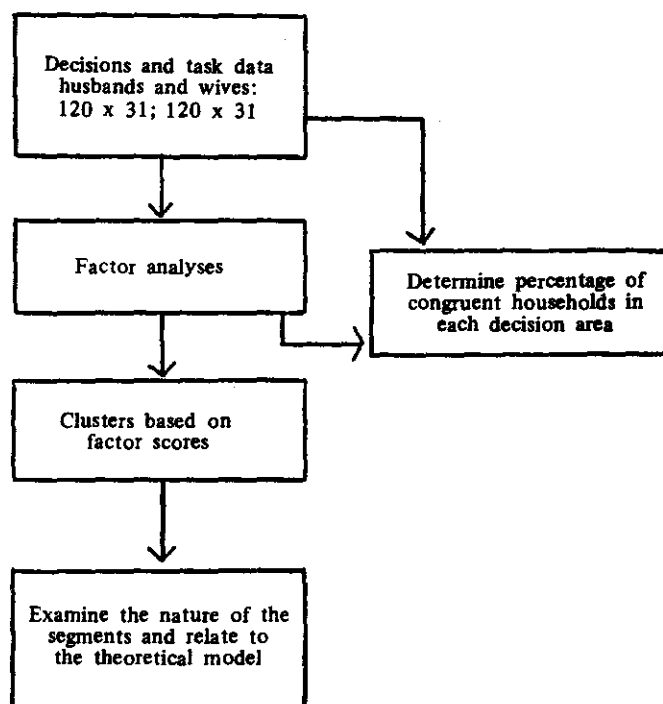


FIGURE 2. PLAN OF ANALYSIS (B) DETERMINING THE DOMINANT ROLE PATTERN ACROSS DECISIONS AND AREAS

Decision and task groupings



for investigating differences among families in role patterns were explored: first, families were divided into groups based on attitudes toward male dominance, and role patterns in each group were compared; second, families were grouped based on reported role patterns in the various decision-areas and tasks, and their attitudinal and socioeconomic characteristics investigated (Figure 2). The findings of these two phases are next discussed in more detail.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The Degree of Congruence Between Husband and Wife Responses

The aggregate level. First, the way in which husbands and wives group decisions and tasks into areas of responsibility was examined. Although previous research has examined differences in husbands' and wives' responses by individual decisions or tasks, little attention has been paid to the interrelationships between different decisions and tasks. These may, nonetheless, be important in understanding and interpreting husband-wife discrepancies due to the impact of cultural role biases in areas perceived as "male" or "female" or neutral.

A hierarchical cluster analysis of the 31 scales was undertaken separately for husbands and wives.³ This groups together the scales based on similarity of responses of husbands (or wives).⁴ Thus, two decisions or tasks for which all husbands (or all wives) give the same response (*i.e.*, 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 on the scale) will cluster closely together, while two tasks for which few husbands or wives give similar responses will appear in separate clusters.

This analysis suggested that the underlying structures or grouping of responsibilities were similar for husbands and for wives. In both

cases there was a cluster of apparently "wife-dominated" activities, such as drying and washing the dishes, doing the laundry, deciding how much to spend on food, and shopping for food. There was also a cluster of "joint family and household decisions," including decisions about where to go on vacations, what friends to invite for dinner, what movie to go to, how much to spend on appliances, what new furniture and furnishings to buy, and whether or not the wife should go to work. There were, however, some differences in relation to the remaining decision areas. The wives divided these into four different groups: (a) the so-called traditional male-dominated tasks, such as getting the car serviced, deciding what liquor to buy, purchasing liquor and tending the lawn; (b) family financial decisions, including how much to spend on family investment and savings, what credit cards to have, what bank to go to, how much life insurance to have; (c) a fashion area including purchasing male toiletries, clothing for self and spouse; and (d) a separate class composed of routine bill paying. The husbands, however, did not differentiate among these typically "male" tasks.

Thus, wives' perceptions of responsibility for predominantly "male" tasks or male-dominated family decisions appeared to be somewhat different from those of husbands. Wives appear to differentiate among these tasks, perhaps based on their perceived degree of influence and competence. In relation to tasks such as servicing cars and buying liquor, wives may perceive their competence and influence as low; in family financial decisions there may sometimes be joint participation and involvement; whereas in clothing decisions wives may act as influencer or consultant.

Since certain differences between husbands and wives were apparent, a correlation analysis of the 31 scales for husbands and wives was conducted in order to examine more closely the level of congruence for each individual scale.⁵ This showed some significant differences relative to various decisions and activities. The correlation coefficients

³The Johnson hierarchical clustering routine was used (Johnson, 1967). Further details concerning this clustering analysis can be obtained from the authors.

⁴The input measure of proximity used here was the frequency of "matching" or identical responses for each pair of the 31 scales across respondents. Thus, if all respondents indicated the same position on scale 1 as on scale 2, the proximity measure between scale 1 and 2 had a value of 120; if 100 indicated identical positions it had a value of 100 and so on. On this basis, proximity or similarities matrices (31 x 31 diagonal matrices) were calculated separately for husbands and for wives, resulting in a rank ordering of proximity between each possible pair of scales.

⁵It should be noted that this analysis probably understates the degree of association between husband and wife scales, due to possible inequality in scale intervals (*i.e.*, "mainly" and "exclusively" may be perceived as very close together).

ranged from .15 for the amount to spend on major household appliances and the choice of movie or theater (i.e., relatively low congruence) to .86 for routine bill paying (i.e., high congruence). Agreement was generally lower for decisions than activities.

friends for dinner. There is, however, little doubt as to who did the dishes last night, or who pays the bills.

The individual level of analysis. Further examination of the nature and degree of incongruence was then conducted at an

TABLE 1. CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR HUSBAND AND WIFE RESPONSIBILITY SCALES FOR HOUSEHOLD DECISIONS AND TASKS

Household Decisions		Household Tasks	
Choice of clothing for husband	0.65	Routine bill paying	0.86
Amount to spend on food per week	0.57	Shopping for food items	0.79
Amount to set aside for savings and investment	0.48	Washing dishes	0.71
Choice of general magazine subscriptions	0.48	Investments and savings	0.70
Choice of credit cards	0.46	Cleaning carpet	0.68
Choice of bank	0.41	Getting car serviced	0.65
How much life insurance to carry	0.39	Tending lawn	0.61
Choice of men's toiletries	0.38	Shopping for clothing for wife	0.60
Where to go on family vacation	0.38	Drying dishes	0.57
Wife should go to or quit work	0.35	Doing laundry	0.55
Brand of major appliances to buy	0.33	Purchasing liquor	0.52
What liquor to buy	0.32	Shopping for household furnishings	0.52
Choice of new furniture or furnishings	0.32	Shopping for clothing for husband	0.34
Brand of new T.V. to be purchased	0.30		
Make and model of new car to be purchased	0.30		
Which friends to invite for dinner	0.26		
What movie or theater to go to	0.16		
Amount spent on major kitchen appliance	0.15		

This finding confirmed findings that emerged in previous studies (Burchinal and Bauder, 1962; Granbois and Willett, 1970; Larson 1974; Olson and Rabunsky, 1972). Respondents experience greater difficulty in identifying who is responsible for making a decision than for performing a task. It may be difficult to assess who influenced what in deciding to buy a new T.V., or to invite

individual household level for each husband-wife pair. Five categories of congruence were identified, summarizing the nine cells of a 3 x 3 matrix of husband versus wife responses shown in Figure 3. For this analysis the initial 5-point scale was collapsed into a 3-point scale, since the difference between "exclusively" and "mainly" was felt to be of minor interest in this context. Three congruent

FIGURE 3. PATTERNS OF HUSBAND-WIFE CONGRUENCE

		Wives' Perception:		
		Husband Dominant	Joint	Wife Dominant
Husbands' Perception:	Husband Dominant	Congruent (1)	Low Incongruency (2)	High Incongruency (3)
	Joint	Low Incongruency (4)	Congruent (5)	Low Incongruency (6)
	Wife Dominant	High Incongruency (7)	Low Incongruency (8)	Congruent (9)

categories (*i.e.*, the three diagonal cells: both agreed the husband was exclusively or mainly responsible [cell 1]; both agreed the wife was exclusively or mainly responsible [cell 9]; and both agreed the decision was made jointly [cell 5]) were identified as well as two categories of incongruence (*low*—in which one spouse indicated that one of them was responsible, while the other spouse indicated joint responsibility [cells 2, 4, 6, 8]; and *high*—in which each spouse indicated the opposite person was responsible [cells 3 and 7]).

Examination of the proportion of households in each of the cells for each of the 31 major decision and activity areas (Table 2) suggested that incongruence was mostly associated with confusion between a joint- and a husband- or wife-dominant decision. The

only area in which there was a substantial proportion of highly incongruent couples was in relation to purchase of men's toiletries. Since a high proportion of purchases in this category are gifts, there may be some ambiguity as to whether the wife perceives herself or is perceived by her husband as being responsible when buying such items for him.

As in the correlation analysis, incongruence tended to be low in relation to activities. The only activities falling into the moderate incongruence area were shopping for clothing for husbands, and taking care of savings and investments. In both cases the specific tasks included were not precisely defined and this may have given rise to differences in perceptual sets. For instance, under "clothing," wives may include underwear they

TABLE 2. THE DEGREE OF INCONGRUENCE FOR THE DECISION AREAS AND TASKS

Decision Area	Percentage of Households			% Congruent Responses
	Incongruent Responses Low*	High**	Overall	
High Incongruence**				
Men's toiletries	12	22	34	66
Moderate Incongruence				
Wife to quit work	38	8	46	54
Brand of major appliances	41	5	46	54
Make or model of new car	39	3	42	58
Shopping for clothing for husband	33	6	39	61
Brand of new T.V.	35	3	38	62
General magazines	32	5	37	63
Credit cards	32	4	36	64
Amount on major kitchen appliance	30	6	36	64
New furniture or furnishings	34	1	35	65
Investments and savings	33	—	33	67
Movie or theater	30	3	33	67
Clothing for husband	25	7	32	68
Bank	29	3	32	68
Liquor	26	6	32	68
Amount on food per week	26	3	29	71
Friends for dinner	27	2	29	71
Amount on savings and investment	26	2	28	72
Amount on life insurance	24	4	28	72
Family vacation	23	—	23	77
Low Incongruence*				
Tending lawn	18	4	21	79
Shopping for clothing for wife	16	3	20	80
Shopping for household furnishings	20	—	20	80
Purchasing liquor	14	4	18	82
Getting car serviced	15	3	18	82
Routine bill paying	16	1	17	83
Drying dishes	8	1	9	91
Cleaning carpet	9	—	9	91
Doing laundry	7	1	9	92
Shopping for food	7	0	7	93
Washing dishes	5	—	5	95

*Low incongruence: Husband indicates wife or self dominant when wife indicates joint decision, or joint when wife indicates self or husband dominant.

**High incongruence: Husband and wife indicate opposite spouse dominant.

purchase for husbands, whereas husbands may think in terms of outerwear. Or, in relation to savings, husbands may think of long term investment plans, while wives think of their role in making day to day economies, and putting money aside for the savings account.

Incongruence also tended to be higher in relation to activities or decisions which occur infrequently; for example, deciding about the wife quitting work, choosing the make of car, shopping for clothing or household furnishings. The last time such a decision was made was likely to have been sometime ago, and hence respondents might have difficulty in recalling what happened. Decisions which involved multiple acts (as, for example, finding out information for use in making brand choices, shopping for and purchasing products, etc.) and, possibly, different users (such as those decisions involving choice of general magazines, and choice of credit cards) were also more prone to incongruence. This is possibly due to the fact that different spouses were influential on different occasions, or because families did not have established standard operating procedures for decision-making or task performance. Conversely, incongruence was lowest in areas where task responsibility was specialized by sex as, for example, in household-cleaning activities, or car and liquor purchasing.

In general, therefore, analysis at the individual household level, based on a simplified 3-point scale, suggested that incongruence arose mostly between the degree of joint- as opposed to individual-participation in decision-making and task performance. It appeared to occur typically in cases in which an "objective reality" was difficult to assess or recall, or in which the question could give rise to differing interpretations by husbands and wives. Thus, while some evidence of cultural role bias emerges, measurement error appears to be a major source of incongruity.

Individual Family Differences in Characteristic Responsibility Patterns across Decision Areas and Tasks

In the second phase of analysis, differences in role patterns among individual families were examined, using two procedures.

The first procedure consisted of grouping families based on attitudes towards marital

roles. This approach rests on the assumption that the family's role ideology will determine who is responsible for various decisions or tasks (Levinger, 1964; Parsons and Bales, 1955; Wilkening and Bharadwaj, 1967). It has, for example, been hypothesized that households subscribing to male dominance ideology will exhibit traditional responsibility patterns with the husband assuming responsibility for financial decisions, and the wife for household activities, etc. Those subscribing to an egalitarian philosophy will be characterized by a greater degree of joint responsibility in the various decision areas (Heer, 1963; Hoffman, 1960).

In line with this theory, a factor analysis of the attitudinal statements relating to marital roles was conducted, leading to the identification of a factor concerned with attitudes toward male dominance. Several of the statements with high loadings on this factor were the same as those used to measure male dominance in a previous study (Hoffman, 1960; see Appendix 1). Respondent scores on statements with loadings on this factor were then clustered to examine family differences in attitudes toward male dominance.⁴

Based on this analysis, six attitudinal groups were identified and the decision and task allocation patterns of each were compared. This revealed little indication of any systematic relationship between marital role attitudes and responsibility patterns, and did not appear to provide a particularly useful way of examining individual household or family differences. In particular, it raised some doubts as to whether or not role ideologies influence how decision-making and task responsibilities are allocated in a family.

The second procedure consisted of characterizing households based on reported role patterns for a set of decisions and tasks as in the Blood and Wolfe study (Blood and Wolfe, 1960). First, in order to identify relevant groups of decision and task areas with which to categorize families, a factor analysis of the 31 decision and task scales was conducted, and dominant role patterns in each area examined (Table 3). This suggested

⁴Respondent ratings for the statements with loadings of over .50 on this factor were submitted to the Howard Harris clustering routine (Howard and Harris, 1966). Further details of the analysis can be obtained from the authors.

TABLE 3. DOMINANT PATTERN FOR EIGHT DECISION AND TASK AREAS

Decision Areas	Percentage of congruent responses		
	% Husband Dominant	% Wife Dominant	% Joint
<u>Brand Choice Decision</u>			
Make or model of new car	74	4	22
Brand of new TV set	33	1	66
Family vacation trip	9	3	8
<u>Entertainment and Social Decisions</u>			
Amount spent per week for food	6	86	8
Friends for dinner	—	11	89
New furniture	—	50	50
<u>Male Clothing Decision</u>			
Men's toiletries	71	24	5
Men's clothing	59	22	19
<u>Financial Decision</u>			
Choice of bank	38	6	56
Amount spent on savings and investment	35	11	54
Choice of credit cards	48	5	47
Amount spent on life insurance	72	—	28
<u>Task Areas</u>			
<u>Household Cleaning</u>			
Washing dishes	3	87	10
Drying dishes	1	91	8
Doing laundry	3	92	5
Cleaning carpet	9	81	10
<u>Family Finances</u>			
Taking care of routine bill paying	43	43	14
Taking care of investment/savings	52	12	36
<u>Clothes Shopping</u>			
Shopping for clothing for husband	50	20	30
Shopping for clothing for wife	1	94	5
Shopping for household furnishings	0	16	84
<u>Car and Liquor</u>			
Getting car serviced	92	5	3
Purchasing liquor	74	7	19

that few areas were husband-dominant, wife-dominant or joint across all households. The exceptions were car and liquor purchases which were typically the husband's responsibility and household chores which were typically the wife's. In other areas, the pattern varied from household to household: brand choice decisions were generally either husband or joint responsibility, and entertainment decisions involved wife or joint decisions. The greatest variation occurred in relation to financial decisions which were almost equally divided between husband-dominant and joint households.

Since there were substantial differences among households for most decision and task areas, all 31 were used to categorize family role patterns. Again, a clustering procedure was used to identify types of role patterns.

Households were thus clustered based on the factor scores from the analysis of the 31 scales.⁷ The scores rather than the original scale measures were used because they synthesized the data and implied giving equivalent weight to the groups of decisions and tasks identified, rather than equal weight to each individual decision or task. In order to retain information on the responses of both spouses, both sets of factor scores were used in the analysis and the clustering was based on household units not individuals. Using this procedure, six groups were identified, and the key decisions and tasks characterizing the six groups were examined.⁸ A multiple discriminant analysis was conducted to identify these group profiles, since they were not provided by the clustering program (Table 4).

TABLE 4. KEY DISCRIMINATING DECISIONS AND TASKS FOR THE SIX GROUPS

Dependent Variable	Group Mean on 5-pt. Scale*						Univariate** F Ratio
	Gr 1 (24)	Gr 2 (22)	Gr 3 (17)	Gr 4 (15)	Gr 5 (17)	Gr 6 (25)	
<u>Decisions</u>							
Clothing for husband (M)	1.8	2.2	1.9	4.0	2.3	3.3	23.9
Life insurance (W)	1.5	1.5	2.2	2.4	2.8	2.4	9.7
Amount to spend on food (M)	3.2	4.3	4.3	4.6	4.0	3.7	7.7
Bank (M)	2.3	1.8	2.8	3.3	2.7	2.6	5.8
Clothing for husband (W)	1.6	2.7	2.0	3.9	2.6	3.0	4.1
Credit card (M)	1.8	2.2	3.1	2.9	3.3	2.4	3.8
Amount spent on savings and invest- ments (W)	2.0	2.0	3.1	3.3	3.2	2.6	3.6
Wife to quit work (W)	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.4	3.9	2.7	3.6
Men's toiletries (M)	1.5	2.3	1.7	3.5	2.6	3.4	3.3
Amount spent on household appliance (W)	2.4	2.9	2.7	2.5	3.1	3.1	3.6
<u>Tasks</u>							
Family savings (W)	1.6	1.2	3.3	3.9	3.1	2.7	25.5
Shopping for clothing for husband (W)	1.5	3.0	2.0	4.0	2.7	3.0	21.4
Drying dishes (W)	4.4	4.7	4.6	4.9	3.3	4.3	15.1
Shopping for food (M)	3.4	4.7	4.1	4.6	4.1	3.6	6.9
Routine bill writing	1.8	1.7	4.2	4.6	3.0	3.2	5.6
Family savings	1.8	1.5	3.5	3.8	3.1	2.6	3.3
Tending lawn (W)	1.9	2.4	1.5	2.0	2.2	1.7	3.3
Getting car serviced (M)	1.4	1.9	1.9	2.2	2.1	2.1	3.1
Purchasing liquor (W)	1.2	1.8	1.6	2.0	2.3	1.7	3.1
Washing dishes (M)	4.2	4.6	4.8	4.5	3.3	4.4	3.1

*The group means are based on the 5-pt. scales described earlier, where exclusively made by husband is coded -1, exclusively by wife -5; hence the higher the mean the higher the wife involvement.

**The F Ratios indicate the characteristics which are the most important in discriminating between the groups; i.e., those with the highest F ratio. The analysis should not, however, be interpreted other than in this descriptive sense (i.e., predictively) since the variables used to discriminate are those on which the groups were initially formed.

A variety of profiles emerged. One group consisted of apparently "male dominant" families, in which husbands dominated in all decision areas and in performing all tasks except the traditional wife tasks of drying and washing dishes. Another group was primarily characterized by a pattern of sex specialization in relation to traditional areas: i.e., household cleaning and shopping (the wife's responsibility) and financial decisions (the husband's responsibility) but with some wife involvement in purchase of husband's clothing, and to a lesser extent in other decisions. A somewhat similar pattern emerged in a third group except that here male clothing was clearly the husband's domain, and wife participation in the financial area was somewhat more pronounced. A fourth group was "wife-dominant," and wives dominated in many traditionally male areas, particularly in financial decisions and activities and also in relation to

husband's clothing. In a fifth group, wife involvement in various financial decisions was marked, though absent in regard to husband's clothing, and counterbalanced by the active role of husbands in household cleaning. In the sixth group, joint responsibility was the dominant mode, particularly in relation to husband's clothing and household items.

The observed patterns of decision-making and task allocation, therefore, appear to be somewhat complex and difficult to categorize in terms of a "dominant-authority" concept. In two cases (i.e., groups 1 and 4), the dominant partner is clearly indicated, as is the shared responsibility in group 6, but the nature of the family authority structure in the remaining three groups is by no means clear. Is it, for example, appropriate to hypothesize that wives in group 3 have more influence and authority than those in group 2 because they participate more in financial affairs, when

¹Separate factor analyses were first conducted for husbands and wives to ensure that the underlying structures were similar in both cases.

*The six cluster solution was selected after careful examination of the 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 cluster solutions, since it provided the most clearly differentiated groups.

they are less involved in other areas such as purchase of liquor, and husband's clothing? Also, whereas these two groups clearly differ from groups 5 and 6 in the way in which they organize family responsibilities, comparisons of the overall balance of authority in the four groups are difficult if not impossible. Further investigation of the importance attached by couples to authority in various areas is needed before such evaluations can be made.

CONCLUSION

Although the usual caveats in view of the convenience nature of the sample and its size are necessary, the analysis, nonetheless, provides some useful insights into the two issues examined, particularly in terms of directions for future research.

In the first place, the findings suggest that an important source of discrepancy between husbands' and wives' responses is the measurement instrument. Incongruence appears frequently to be associated with questions which may be open to differing interpretations. Some of the measures used in this study, as with those commonly used in other studies, suffer from too great a reliance on recall concerning decisions or acts which took place sometime in the past, or which involve multiple decisions and acts. Furthermore, since some of the decisions and tasks may be themselves a consequence of a number of prior decisions, and may comprise a number of different stages or subdecisions for which a different party was responsible, it may be difficult for the respondent to assess the exact contribution of each party to the final decision.

Further examination of discrepancies in husband and wife responses, therefore, could focus on first reducing errors arising from unreliable measurement instruments. In particular, research to develop less ambiguous questions and improved data collection techniques for self-report measures of role and authority patterns is needed. In this context, the Campbell-Fiske, multimethod, multitrait procedure (Campbell and Fiske, 1959), as yet seldom used in family research, provides a useful approach.* A similar application to that used by Cromwell, Klein and Wieting (1975) to compare two observational measures of three family traits could be made to examine measures based on different self-report data collection techniques

(methods) and concerned with different facets of family authority and roles (traits). Reliability of responses from different family members or outside observers, the use of projective techniques and nonverbal stimuli, and the discriminatory power and convergence of measures relating to different concepts of authority could be explored. Other factors which could be examined are: who is perceived to have the right to authority or to make a decision; who is predicted to be likely to make a decision; and who actually made a decision or exercised authority (Olson and Rabunsky, 1972)?

Longitudinal studies would also help to identify problems of time recall associated with decisions made infrequently, as well as to test the stability of measures. An initial phase of data collection from both spouses and/or other family members would be required along with a follow-up interview with the same families at a later date. Test-retest correlation procedures (Guilford, 1954) could then be applied to examine measurement instability and to separate this out from actual change in authority and role patterns (Heise, 1959).

Results of the investigation of individual differences between households in the allocation of responsibility for various decision areas and tasks suggest that such divisions of responsibility seldom reflect a dominant authority pattern. Furthermore, even among families (approximately half the sample) in which a dominant authority pattern appears to exist, it emerges most clearly in relation to the traditional sex-specialized areas such as financial decisions or housekeeping, rather than new or "open" areas, such as shopping for furniture, choosing vacations, etc.

Thus, it does not appear at this stage in our understanding that a unidimensional concept of a dominant authority pattern in a family provides a useful approach. Further research examining role authority patterns relating to different types of decisions and tasks appears desirable before attempting to develop global measures of family authority. The boundaries of relevant task and decision areas such as financial decisions, household management,

*For some exceptions, see Davis, 1971; Cromwell, Klein and Wieting, 1975; Shuptrine and Samuelson, 1976; and Wilkes, 1975.

etc., need to be identified. Investigation of links in the authority mechanism between such things as the bases or determinants of authority, influence processes and decision-making procedures can then be conducted. This will help to improve understanding of how the authority system operates in each area. Similarities and differences in this mechanism in different areas of responsibility, and interdependencies between areas can then be studied.

In general, then, it seems that considerable further research is needed to evaluate alternative methodological procedures when studying family authority and role patterns. While attention has already been drawn to some of the issues, systematic investigation and analysis is essential to achieve progress.

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APPENDIX 1. THE MALE DOMINANCE SCALE

	Factor Loadings
Variables (Husbands)	
Some equality in marriage is a good thing, but a husband ought to have the main say in financial matters	-.78
A wife should let her husband decide most things	-.72
A wife should fit her life to her husband's	-.68
Women who want to remove the word obey from marriage don't understand what it means to be a wife	-.58
It is somehow unnatural to place women in positions of authority over men	-.46
Once I have made up my mind, I seldom change it	-.46
It is only natural and right that women be restricted in certain ways in which men have more freedom	-.41
Variables (Wives)	
Some equality in marriage is a good thing, but a husband ought to have the main say in financial matters	-.76
A wife should let her husband decide most things	-.73
A woman's place is in the house	-.62
It is somehow unnatural to place women in positions of authority over men	-.60
Marriage is the best career for a woman	-.50
Women who want to remove the word obey from marriage don't understand what it means to be a wife	-.50
A wife should fit her life to her husband's	-.49