

**Gender and Racial Inequality among Immigrant
and Non-Immigrant American Married Couples:
The Case of Household Labor**

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This paper examines how gender and race influence the distribution of domestic labor in immigrant and non-immigrant married households. Previous sociological research has focused on the distribution of domestic labor among American married couples. Prior research reports persistent gender inequality, favoring husbands. Much of the research on gendered behavior at home, however, makes no distinction between immigrant and non-immigrant individuals or couples. The samples from which some of the research results are drawn treat respondents similarly in regard to their immigrant status. We know that nationally, foreign born individuals constitute a significant portion of the US population. Yet, few social science surveys include immigrant status in their sampling frame. As a result, we are less certain about the impact of gender inequality among immigrant married couples living in the United States, and how such inequality compares to non-immigrant married couples.

Using the 2003 – 2006 American Time Use Survey, I explore the impact of gender and race on the distribution of domestic labor in married immigrant households. More specifically, after controlling for education, total household income, age, and number of children in the household, I compare the allocation of housework in immigrant and non-immigrant American family households.

The OLS regression results show that both gender and race were important factors in determining the domestic labor arrangements among wives. When compared to their

husbands, wives allocated more time to the domestic labor. Black wives spent less time on housework, compared to wives of other races. Immigrant wives spent more time on domestic labor compared to non-immigrant wives.

With respect to husbands, gender was also an important factor, but race and immigrant status were not. As noted earlier husbands contributed less time to housework. Immigrant and non-immigrant husbands and husbands of different races allocated similar amount of time to the domestic labor.

These results suggest that the unequal distribution of housework time was more burdensome for immigrant wives than non-immigrant wives. While the results confirm the “production of gender” thesis in married couples, this reproduction of gender is exacerbated in immigrants married couples.