

Dads Who Share the Load Bolster Daughters' Aspirations

May 28, 2014

Fathers who help with household chores are more likely to raise daughters who aspire to less traditional, and potentially higher paying, careers, according to research forthcoming in *Psychological Science*, a journal of the [Association for Psychological Science](#).

The study findings indicate that how parents share dishes, laundry and other domestic duties plays a key role in shaping the gender attitudes and aspirations of their children, especially daughters.



While mothers' gender and work equality beliefs were key factors in predicting kids' attitudes toward gender, the strongest predictor of daughters' own professional ambitions was their fathers' approach to household chores.

“This suggests girls grow up with broader career goals in households where domestic duties are shared more equitably by parents,” says psychology researcher and study author Alyssa Croft, a PhD Candidate in the University of British Columbia’s Department of Psychology. “How fathers treat their domestic duties appears to play a unique gatekeeper role.”

The study results suggest that parents' domestic actions may speak louder than words. Even when fathers publicly endorsed gender equality, if they retained a traditional division of labor at home, their daughters were more likely to envision themselves in traditionally female-dominant jobs, such as nurse, teacher, librarian or stay-at-home-mom.

“Despite our best efforts to create workplace equality, women remain severely under-represented in leadership and management positions,” says Croft. “This study is important because it suggests that achieving gender equality at home may be one way to inspire young women to set their sights on careers from which they have traditionally been excluded.”

The study involved 326 children aged 7-13 and at least one of their parents. For each household,

researchers calculated the division of chores and paid labor. They also determined the career stereotypes that participants identified with, their gender and work attitudes and children's career aspirations.

The study found mothers shouldered more of the burden of housework than men, which echoes previous findings. Parents and kids associated women more than men with childcare and domestic work, and girls were significantly more likely than boys to say they want to be like adults who take care of kids rather than someone who has a career.

“‘Talking the talk’ about equality is important, but our findings suggest that it is crucial that dads ‘walk the walk’ as well — because their daughters clearly are watching,” says Croft, noting that girls might be learning from an early age to take on *additional* roles, rather than different roles, compared to boys.

Alyssa Croft explains the study in this video from the University of British Columbia:

Croft's study co-authors are Prof. Toni Schmader, Katharina Block and Prof. Andrew Baron of the University of British Columbia Department of Psychology.

Video and researcher photos can be downloaded via Dropbox at:
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d4hv1rdi2zq4s2i/AADp2-3v5JPV_H0E3HOsJtPHa