

Dads who do chores bolster daughters' aspirations

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Credit: Vera Kratochvil/public domain

Fathers who help with household chores are more likely to raise daughters who aspire to less traditional, and potentially higher paying, careers.

So finds a new study that suggests 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 lead author Alyssa Croft, a PhD Candidate in the University of British Columbia's Dept. of Psychology. "How fathers treat their domestic duties appears to play a unique gatekeeper role."

The study, to appear in *Psychological Science*, suggests parents' domestic actions may speak louder than words. Even when fathers publically endorsed gender equality, if they retained a traditional division of labour 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 labour. 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 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.

The study, *The Second Shift Reflected in the Second Generation: Do Parents' Gender Roles at Home Predict Children's Aspirations?*, took place at UBC's Living Laboratory in Science World in Vancouver. Croft's study co-authors are Prof. Toni Schmader, Katharina Block and Prof. Andrew Baron of UBC's Dept. of Psychology.

Provided by University of British Columbia

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