

When newlyweds believe in sharing household chores, follow-through is everything

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Credit: Jeff Belmonte / Wikipedia

Of all the starry-eyed just-married couples you know, which couples are likely to stay the happiest? A University of Illinois study says chances for bliss are highest when husband and wife both believe in divvying up

the household labor equally. But that happiness won't last long if one partner is perceived as not carrying their fair share of the load.

"Newlyweds need to thoughtfully plan how they can make their expectations about sharing chores work out in real life, especially if the new spouses strongly value gender equality in household labor. This issue will only matter more after children start arriving," said Brian G. Ogolsky, a U of I professor of human development and family studies.

The way that [couples](#) negotiate the division of household chores in the first two years of marriage is important because, once patterns are established, they persist over time and can lead to increased conflict and decreased happiness in the marriage for years to come, he said.

The study examined the beliefs, behaviors, and [marital quality](#) of 220 heterosexual newlywed couples and found that dividing [household tasks](#) affected the marital satisfaction of wives but not of husbands. When wives valued equal sharing of housework, they were significantly happier if their husband shared those beliefs.

When couples divided household tasks in traditional ways, close matches in belief and behavior didn't seem to affect marital satisfaction as much, he said.

"These results were interesting because usually [marital satisfaction](#) is studied in only one spouse. Here we were able to see what happens when there's a discrepancy in spouses' attitudes on this issue. If a woman believes that household chores should be divided equally, what happens if they adopt a traditional approach to the matter? The most satisfied couples have similar expectations and follow through on them," he said.

"For husbands, sharing household tasks isn't as directly related to their satisfaction. Either they don't perceive that there is a discrepancy or they

have bought into the idea that the second shift belongs to women," he said.

The important thing is to enter a marriage with a clear understanding of where your partner stands on these issues, he noted.

"Such an understanding helps couples avoid becoming disillusioned as the marriage goes on," he said.

More information: The article is available pre-publication online in *Sex Roles* at [link.springer.com/article/10.1 ... 07/s11199-014-0365-9](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11199-014-0365-9)

Provided by University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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