

More Men Tackle Household Tasks

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American men are helping with chores and child care more than ever, a trend that ultimately contributes to healthier marriages, according to a researcher at the University of California, Riverside.

In a paper published on March 6 by the Council on Contemporary Families, sociologists Scott Coltrane of UCR and Oriel Sullivan of Ben Gurion University reported a steady trend in the past 40 years of more couples of all ages sharing family tasks.

“Men and women may not be fully equal yet, but the rules of the game have been profoundly and irreversibly changed,” they wrote in their paper, “Men’s changing contribution to housework and child care.”

Coltrane and Sullivan found that men’s contributions to household chores have doubled since the 1960s, to more than 30 percent of the total from about 15 percent. The average woman – employed full or part time – with children is doing two hours less housework per week than in 1965.

During the same period fathers tripled the amount of time spent in child care, and mothers doubled the time spent with children.

“This mutual increase in child care appears to be related to high standards for both mothers and fathers about spending time with children,” the researchers wrote.

Total hours of work – paid and family – done by men and women has

remained roughly equal since the 1960s, Coltrane and Sullivan said. Women's paid work time has significantly increased while that of men has decreased. The time women devote to housework has decreased while the time men spend in family work of all kinds has increased. "Men share more family work if their female partners are employed more hours, earn more money, and have spent more years in education," they said.

"(B)elief in gender equality within families continues to gain acceptance among both men and women," Coltrane and Sullivan wrote.

"...(R)esearch shows that when men do more of the housework, women's perceptions of fairness and marital satisfaction rise and the couple experiences less marital conflict. ... (C)ouples in the USA who have more equal divisions of labor are less likely to divorce than couples where one partner specializes in breadwinning and the other partner specializes in family work."

Source: University of California, Riverside

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