

Are young men and women divided over housework, abortion?

August 13 2008

Young people from 10 countries around the world have shared their views on housework and abortion issues in a new study from the University of Adelaide, Australia.

The research, conducted by Professor Chilla Bulbeck in the University's Discipline of Gender, Work and Social Inquiry, looked at the attitudes of young men and women to a number of gender equality issues.

Small surveys were conducted at high schools and universities in the United States, Canada, Australia, Korea, China, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, India and Indonesia.

"Apart from Australia and Japan, my samples were small and confined to young, middle-class urbanites. Nevertheless, this study is unusual because it covers so many nations, and the comparisons offer some interesting food for thought," Professor Bulbeck says.

"Overall, the results show that young men and women are divided on the issues of sharing housework and a woman's right to have an abortion. It should come as no surprise that young women are more in favour of domestic democracy than the young men, while also being more supportive of a woman's right to have an abortion," she says.

"It is interesting to note that those in western countries tend to see sharing housework and 'role reversal' as similar ideas, whereas most of those from Asian countries who are also supportive of sharing

housework were quite opposed to role reversal. While this might indicate to some people that greater equality exists in the western countries, another interpretation is that it demonstrates the greater commitment to the fathers' bread-winning role in the Asian countries."

Professor Bulbeck says the young men surveyed were more likely to want to have their say on abortion than they were on sharing housework.

"While performing housework and childcare was seen as nothing short of emasculation for many of the young men in my study, this does not prevent them from claiming their rights in relation to abortion decisions," she says.

"The Chinese people surveyed were the most accepting of a woman's right to have an abortion, with both males and females seeing this as her decision. In some cases, the Chinese responses asserted that both parents had responsibilities in relation to the child, but it was the woman's right alone to choose an abortion."

Source: University of Adelaide

Citation: Are young men and women divided over housework, abortion? (2008, August 13)
retrieved 4 May 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2008-08-young-men-women-housework-abortion.html>

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