

COMMUNITY ETHNOGRAPY PROPOSAL: DO CANADIAN MEN DO HOUSEWORK?

The members of our group, NN, FW, ML, AY, and M-FG, propose to create a survey questionnaire about the division of housework between Canadian men and women in today's society. It has now been over thirty years since the second wave of feminism has started changing some attitudes towards gender equality in the work place and in public life. Family life has also been affected in many ways with many women now working outside the home either through necessity or choice. Sociologists have been researching the effects of women working outside the home. In particular, the research is often focused on the roles men and women feel they should play in the family dynamics. Some, like David Popenoe ("Modern Marriage: Revising the Cultural Script") feel that if family trends are left to continue, the social order will become anarchic. He feels that there should be a "marriage pattern" set in place with gender-roles being specifically defined so there will be no confusion as to who does what (Popenoe 1996: 171). Popenoe believes that the 1950s model was the ideal with the father in charge and the primary breadwinner, his role defined by the public sphere, and the mother being the educator and nurturer of the children, her role defined by the private sphere though it should be equitable (Popenoe 1996: 171). Popenoe believes that this will alleviate any confusion created by the feminist movement; to quote, "gender-roles become uncertain, it is no longer clear who should do what" (Popenoe 1996: 173).

Sociologist Scott Coltrane ("Household Labour and the Routine Production of Gender") researched the division of labour in his studies of couples with young children. He found that though some households did share equitably, even after the birth of children, three quarters of the couples admitted the woman did most of the childcare and household tasks (Coltrane 1989: 188-189). When household labour was shared most of the men described the division as practical given the situation, and "ad hoc," with little planning involved (Coltrane 1989: 192). Coltrane formulates a table showing an amazing flexibility on who does what with most couples sharing tasks on a fairly equitable basis but "still partially conforming to a traditional division of household labour (Coltrane 1989: 193-195). In again another study, Lillian Rubin ("The Transformation of Family Life") found that the couples she studied varied greatly in their attitudes towards household labour shared between the men and women and who should do what. Rubin says that many men resent being asked or expected to share in the housework and that they feel victimized when their wives complain (Rubin 1994: 207-208). In general though, Rubin found that men under forty were more likely to share in the task-sharing than those over that age, so it would appear to be generational attitudes. Rubin writes, "Even in families where husbands now share many of the tasks, their wives still bear full responsibility for

the organization of family life” (Rubin 1994: 209). She interestingly enough finds that “What happens – or, more likely, what doesn’t happen – in the kitchen, the living room, and the laundry room profoundly affects what’s possible in the bedroom” (Rubin 1994: 217).

Other studies from The Journal of Sociology show diverse findings when the question of housework arises. One study shows that in households consisting of only men, housework is reproduced as in a marriage with the dominant male assuming the “husband” role and the amount of housework shared in a similar pecking order (Natalier 2003: 253-269). In another study, it is suggested that while surveys show that women are spending less time on housework, it is not because the men are picking up the slack but because less housework is getting done overall (Baxter 2002: 399-424). The Canadian government gathers statistics on gender relations and has estimated that unpaid or non-market work done in Canada is worth between 30.6 percent and 46.3 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product. In terms of time, women carry out 65.6 percent of all unpaid work in the household, and an even greater share of work in caring for children (Canada, Status of Women 2001).

With these studies in mind, we hope to examine the Canadian household division of labour in 2005. We intend to ask no fewer than fifty members of the Malaspina University-College community to share with us their involvement in assuming household chores. We will question members of the Malaspina community at large how much they participate in the many chores required to maintain a home. With the completed questionnaires we will determine percentages of men actively involved in the performance of housework in total, then consider the results as it pertains to the separate age/gender categories. We are interested in seeing if younger men are more likely to do housework than older men. We hope to learn if feminism has had an impact on the gendered division of labour in the home.

APPENDICES:

1. Works cited.
2. Sample Questionnaire.
3. Application for Departmental Ethical Review of Student Projects – Checklist.
4. Departmental Ethics Statement.

Works Cited

Baxter, Janeen

2002 Patterns of Change and Stability in the Gender Division of Household Labour in Australia. Pp. 399-424. Journal of Sociology, Vol. 38, No. 4.

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Popenoe, David

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2003 'I'm not His Wife': Doing Gender and Doing Housework in the Absence of Women. Pp. 253-269. Journal of Sociology, Vol. 39, No. 3.

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SURVEY: HOW DO CANADIANS DIVIDE THE HOUSEWORK?

We are Anthropology students from Malaspina University-College currently enrolled and participating in Anth 326 Ethnographical Research and 112 Introductory Anthropology. This survey is designed to gather information about gender related sharing of household tasks. The results of our research will be available after April 19th by contacting our faculty advisor (see below).

Researchers: AY
ML
NN
FW
M-FG, 753-xxxx

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Imogene Lim, Department of Anthropology
Malaspina University-College, Nanaimo, BC
753-3245: local 2840.

This is an anonymous voluntary survey. By completing the questionnaire, you are giving consent. Your answers will be kept in strictest confidence and will only be used within the classroom-learning environment. You may withdraw your participation at any time and you may skip any questions you do not want to answer.

SURVEY: HOW DO CANADIANS DIVIDE THE HOUSEWORK?

Age Range 18-24 25-30 31-40 41-50 50-65 65 and over
 Sex Male Female Other

Single Married Married Living with Living with
 Heterosexual Same Sex Roommate(s) Parent(s)

Do you
have children living at home? Yes #_____ No

Do you have pets? Yes No

Occupation Student Staff Faculty Other

Yearly Income ≤ \$10,000 ≤ \$20,000 ≤ \$30,000 ≥ \$30,000

Do you consider the following household chores as male, female or shared tasks?

	Male	Female	Shared
1. Taking out the Garbage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Vacuuming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Washing Floors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Dusting the Furniture & Ornaments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Changing the Toilet Paper Roll	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Cleaning the Bathroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Childcare	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Making the Beds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Changing the Sheets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Laundry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Ironing Clothes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Doing Dishes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Grocery Shopping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Cooking Meals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Washing Windows	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Fixing Plumbing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Fixing Electrical Appliances or Wiring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Yard Work (Mowing Lawns, Gardening, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Shoveling Snow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Washing Cars	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Changing Flat Tires	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Pet Care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you do ever hire help for any of the tasks? No Yes

If so please specify_____

Do your children assist in household chores? No Yes

If so please specify_____

Is there a reason you divide the housework the way you do?

Personal preference Necessity Others asked me to do it. Other reasons

Please tell us your comments and specify which household tasks you do.

Thank you for your participation.