

Inequity in pay begins with childhood chores

By Soraya Chemaly, Salon

Gender as an organizing principle for how we value labor appears to have depressingly early, yet unsurprising, roots. Boys, on average, spend two fewer hours doing household chores per week than girls do (they play two hours more). And if they live in households where children are compensated for doing chores, boys make and save more money.

Year after year, studies repeatedly confirm these patterns. The problems women face with unequal pay and housework duties actually start in childhood.



Shoveling snow might garner a higher wage for kids.
Photo/LTN file

A 2009 study conducted by University of Michigan economists found a two-hour gender disparity in responsibilities per week in a study of 3,000 kids. That same year, Highlights magazine, a children's publication, surveyed its readers and found that 75 percent of girls had chores, while just 65 percent of boys did. This disparity in chores and free time continues into adulthood all over the world.

According to the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, men “report spending more time in activities counted as leisure than women. Gender differences in leisure time are wide across OECD countries.”

The fact that boys’ chores appear to be more profitable makes the childhood chore gap even more disturbing. Turns out, parents tend to value the work that boys typically do more highly than the work girls do. A website that helps parents teach children how to earn, spend and save responsibly, [pktmny](#), found “significant divides based on gender, age and the nature of the task being undertaken by each child,” according to Louise Hill, COO of the company.

For example, mowing the lawn generally garners higher allowance wages than folding laundry. Shoveling a snow-covered driveway might yield more cash in hand than emptying the dishwasher.

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