

Role Division in Multicultural Relations

The number of multicultural families in which one spouse was born in Israel and the other is an immigrant has increased in recent years. Mixed marriages have always aroused sociological curiosity, but few studies have shed light on the family dynamics and role division among these couples. Can multicultural families be seen as an arena for the emergence of a new hybrid cultural product that seeks to erase the traditional distinctions in patterns of role division between spouses?

The purpose of this study was to examine the role division between spouses in multicultural families, in which one of the spouses was born in Israel and the other is an immigrant. The research tool was a questionnaire on role division administered to 200 participants: 100 couples in which one of the spouses was born in Israel and the other was an immigrant from another country. The study examined the hypotheses that the origin of the immigrant member of the couple influences the role division and that differences in role division emerge in the comparison between the Israeli-born spouse and the non-Israeli-born spouse. In addition, it examined the hypothesis that education and number of years in Israel affect role division in multicultural families.

In general, differences in role division emerged between men and women. Men reported investing more in the areas of economic support and career, while women reporting investing more in the social and household spheres. Among men, the extent of their investment in household chores decreases as their number of years in Israel rises, while among women, investment in household chores increases along with their number of years in Israel.

No differences in role division by origin emerged among women for any of the job areas examined: housework, economic role, social role and career. But male immigrants from the Soviet Union were found to invest more in the economic role than native Israelis or than immigrants from Western Europe and South America.

With respect to how role division was related to education and origin, the findings show that men with higher education invest more in the social role. In addition, there was a significant interaction effect of education and country of origin on housework among men. Male immigrants from the USSR with higher education invest less in household chores than men from the same country with only 12 years of schooling.

Among women, there was a significant interaction effect of education and country of origin. Women of Western European and South American origin with higher education invest more in their careers than women with up to 12 years of schooling.

No differences in role division were found between immigrant men and immigrant women.

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