

Choices and consequences that people face



Every choice a person makes has consequences, whether they are positive or negative. Many times before a person makes a choice, he/she mentally calculates the cost and benefits of his/her choice. Other times some of the consequences may have not been intended or thought through. The feminist movement is an example of that. While the feminist movement accomplished great things for women, it also hindered women in other areas. Some of the problems related to the ironies of the feminist movement and the mixed message women were receiving. It began to change the way women made choices. Even though the feminist movement affected women's choices, many women have chosen to quit their job in order to raise a family.

Because women were able to have jobs during the war, they realized they were no longer content to be housewives. In the 1960s most of the feminist movement was led by radical feminists. They began to fight for reproductive and employment rights. The Equal Pay Act was enacted in 1963. This meant that employers had to give employees the same amount of money for the same job. During this time abortion was made legal in all fifty states ("Feminsm").

The third round of feminism began in the 1990s. This was led by many types of feminism. It dealt with more than just prejudices against women but also races and economic standing ("Feminsm").

Feminism has many ironies that can be explored. It helps determine how the feminists made their choices and what they meant by them. Dr. Wendy Walsh, who is a clinical psychologist, has an interesting view on feminism.

Even though she is a feminist herself, she believes that it did have negative consequences. She writes, "...feminism didn't liberate femininity. Feminism liberated masculine energy in women. It was a masculinist movement...It pushed femininity in the closet." (Walsh) That statement seems pretty accurate. Feminism did not encourage women to be more feminine. It encouraged women to be like men. Women were supposed to have the same jobs as men and achieve the same success. To many women, this was a good thing, but to others it was not. Walsh comments that women who liked their traditional role were hurt by that. They were then told that their job was not as important as a woman who works outside the home (Walsh).

The feminist movement seemed to start because women said they were unsatisfied being housewives. If that is true, then women should be happier now because they are pursuing careers. However, according to a poll done by ClubMom, a free national membership organization for moms, the results are the exact opposite. Working moms and stay-at-home moms were asked to rate various aspects of their life and to grade their overall satisfaction with life. Working moms rated " A" thirty three percent of the time while stay-at-home moms rated " A" fifty two percent of the time. They also rated their job as a mom. Stay-at-home moms gave themselves an " A" fifty one percent of the time while working moms only did forty five percent of the time.

Interestingly just eight percent of moms would continue to work full time if they did not have to worry about finances (" New Poll").

F. Carolyn Graglia, author of *Domestic Tranquility: A Brief Against Feminism*, also writes about the many ironies of feminism. Betty Friedan, Kate Millett, Germaine Greer and Gloria Steinem were some of the leading women's

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rights movement leaders in the 1960s. They did not support women's roles as a wife and mother, but Betty Friedan was the only one who had been a wife and mother (Graglia 13-14). It seems that the women should not speak against something they have never experienced. Maybe they wanted others to choose what they had chosen to make their choices more acceptable. Friedan did decide to divorce because she believed that she could not tell women to not get married while she herself was still in the awful institution. She claims that marriage "destroyed [her] self-respect." (Graglia 13)

Some women still believe that women can be more satisfied caring for their children opposed to having a successful career. Suzanne Venker writes in *Feminsm: Opposing Viewpoint* about why she believed a woman should choose to stay home. She was an English teacher and then a full time mom. Venker argues that women seem to be unhappy in the workplace. She cites that people have spent over five hundred million dollars on self-help books in 1999 (Finsanisk). Another source says that women count for ninety percent of self-help (Smith). So the vast majority of the self-help books were sold to women. Venker believes that if careers were truly fulfilling women like they are supposedly supposed to do, then people would not need to buy so many self-help books (Finsanick).

Obviously, feminism had a tremendous impact on society. Women achieved the right to vote, have equal jobs, and own property. Many countries had women political leaders, and there were more females than males in many higher institutions. In the U. S., a woman ran for president and another almost became vice president. Husbands and wives also began to split the work more evenly in earning money, taking care of children, and maintaining

the house (“Feminism”). Television changed from June Cleaver vacuuming in high heeled shoes to Clair Huxtable managing a house and her career as a lawyer. It gave women the opportunity to pursue a good career if that is what they wanted, or if they needed to due to finances. With all the changes that many believed to be positive, there were negative as well. Whether feminists intended for it to happen or not, the feminist movement, especially the radical one, brought about some negative consequences. The early feminist’s choices affected everyone.

The feminist movement affected women’s choices. The feminist seemed to focus on equality and women getting to have a choice. They wanted women to be able to choose to be a doctor or architect if that is what she wanted. But when women were given the right to a successful career, it almost became expected of them. Rebecca Scarlett said it like this, “Suddenly, women were no longer allowed to choose. Suddenly women had to be everything they had always been, and be everything men had always been, as well, or they would have to feel inadequate and ashamed!” (Scarlett) Now women who choose to stay home and take care of her children and house, are viewed as being “lazy.” People might think she is not smart enough hold or pursue another job (Scarlett). Feminists’ choices hurt women’s right to choose.

Sometimes people experience consequences as the result of their choices, and other times one must make a choice based on the consequences of choices made by the people around them. That is what many women have to do now. Radical feminists’ choose to devalue a woman’s role with her children and household. The consequences were that women are expected

to pursue a career and now many women must make a choice: do they follow the feminist way or choose to take a different path. After she makes the choice she must see if her choices were worth the consequences. Other times women are forced to make choices whether they want to or not. Some mothers must work due to economic status or single parent homes. But many things are affected by the woman's choice whether it was voluntary or necessary.

In the article in the book *Feminism*, Venker cites Dr. Phil by saying " Life is about tough choices. I never encountered a successful person who didn't have to sacrifice in one area of her life to be successful in another. If you put more into your career, kids and family suffer; if you put more into family, career suffers. That's the bottom line." (Finsanick)

In spite of the feminist encouraging women to seek employment outside the home many women are still choosing to stay home. In fact, in 2005 there were about 5. 6 million stay-at-home moms (" The U. S. Census Bureau") So, why would a woman choose to go to PTA meetings and change diapers when she could be a doctor or lawyer? It seems that women are realizing that it is hard to do it all. They are deciding to put their careers on hold for a few years while they focus on their family.

Iris Krasnow is an example of a woman who quit her job to stay home with her children. Krasnow has written a book about her journey entitled *Surrendering to Motherhood* about her journey. Glenn T. Stanton sums up her book in his article " Two Women Tell All." Iris Krasnow grew up in the radical feminist period. She was an extremely successful journalist for UPI

interviewing some of the most famous and interesting people in the world. Krasnow achieved the feminist goal but she was still empty. She began seeking different things to bring her fulfillment. She later married and they decided to have children. Krasnow and her husband wanted to have “ four [children] by forty” and they did (Stanton). She then tried to have it all by pursuing her career and taking care of her family. Krasnow did this because she believed that her career gave her value and she could not imagine life without it (Stanton). One day when she was feeding her four boy and surrounded by a mess, she realized something:

There are no shackles in their house, this is no jail. These kids are your ticket to freedom like nothing you have ever tasted, the kind that is not hinged on TV appearances or writing for Life magazine or being a size 6 again. It's the liberation that comes from the sheer act of living itself. When you stop to be where you are, then your life can really begin... I realized for the first time in my life I was exactly where I was supposed to be. (Krasnow 157)

Iris Krasnow thought that she could have it all, but she realized that the choices she was making were not the best for her family and children. Her choices were based on what she believed was best for her family and what brought her personal fulfillment. She believes that “ surrendering to motherhood was the most liberating and powerful thing she had ever done in her life.” (Krasnow 2-3)

In F. Carolyn Graglia's book she explores how feminism has hurt women and families and why she chose to stay home. Glenn Stanton also summarizes the book. Graglia grew up with a single mother and was poor. She decided

the ticket out of poverty was to become a lawyer. After college Graglia obtained a job at a Wall Street law firm in the 1950s. At that time it was not common for a woman to have a career like that. She had a successful career until she chose to stay at home when her first child was born. Graglia was not forced to do it; she did it because she wanted to. Like others she chose the choice that wasn't popular. She chose to be a stay-at-home mom in the 1960s and 1970s. Graglia says that people were much more accepting of her choice to be a lawyer in the 1950s than they were of her choice to be a stay-at-home mom (Stanton). She believes that feminism "robbed women of their surest source of fulfillment." (Graglia inside cover) She also believes that feminism tried to tell women that their job as a mother and wife were not valuable.

Candace Cameron Bure is another example of a woman who quit her job to stay home with her children. She is best known for her role as D. J. Tanner on Full House. She has also appeared on other T. V. shows, T. V. movies, and feature films. In 1996 she married Valeri Bure, who is now a retired hockey player. After she got married she decided to postpone her career to raise a family ("Career") When doors were not opening for her in acting she believed it was God telling her to stay home. Bure considers it a great "privilege" to stay home (Rice). She counter argues what society tells women, "Our society says, 'Work! Make more money! The career is great! But stay-at-home moms, you're so not cool. Get going.' But they're wrong. I thank God, who alone is able to keep our hearts in the right place." (Rice) After taking a break from her acting career she has returned to acting. Bure has

been in several movies and plays Summer Van Horn on ABC Family's " Make It Or Break It." (" Career")

People still vary greatly on the opinion if moms should work outside the home. People seem to judge others choices strongly. Parents and mothers, in particular are judged for every choice they make. They are judged from what they feed their children to where they send them to school. A woman's choice to stay at home or pursue a career is not judged any less. No matter what the woman chooses, she will be judged for it. Some may agree with her choice and others may tell her that she made the wrong choice. Some people believe that people are becoming more accepting of whatever choice a woman decides to make. Women on either side of the issue know that each family must decide what choice is best for them. In the article " Mothers Who Chose to Stay Home" Elizabeth Drew School who made the choice to stay home does not judge the choices of other women. Her choice to stay home was best for her family (Gardner).

The choices that a person makes also depend on the culture and expectations that a person was raised with. According to Jolene Ivey in the black culture staying home is not readily accepted. Since the civil rights movement gave them more rights to jobs and education, people did not think it was wise for them to reverse that. When Jolene Ivey decided to stay home with her children she felt like she was alone among her black friends. She then decided to start a support group called Mocha Moms to support black women wanting to stay home (Gardner). When a person has support and encouragement around them it makes his or her choices much easier.

Some mothers choose to stay home because they realize their job will not accommodate their new lifestyle. Elizabeth Scholl is an example of that. She had a master's degree and was very career focused. She even planned having a baby around a project. When she learned that her employer was only going to grant her six weeks of maternity leave she knew that she would not be ready to leave her baby at that time. Scholl said that babies don't even hold their head up by six weeks. She requested to work part time, but her job would not allow it. Then she decided to quit. Scholl says that it "was truly the hardest decision I've ever made. But I came to the realization that these jobs are going to be there when I go back to work." (Gardner) Adjusting to being at home was "very difficult" for her in the beginning (Gardner).

Many jobs are not very accommodating for mothers. Some careers do not allow women to work part time or to work from home. Also many times when families calculate child care expenses and taxes women are not making enough to justify working (Gardner).

Women have many reasons as to why they choose to stay home in spite of the feminist movement telling women to pursue a career. Part of it is a cycle. Women decided that they wanted to alter their lifestyle. They chose to pursue careers and devalue being a housewife. That also resulted with women being unhappy. Because of that some women still decided to choose to stay home. Many women sacrifice their career in order to stay at home with their child. Whether they are quitting their job as a desk clerk, actress, or lawyer, many women are realizing how difficult it is to balance a career with family. Women are being set free by realizing they do not have to do it

all. They can be fulfilled by being a wife and mother. Many women believe their choice to stay home is well worth it.