

American culture vs. jewish culture: success stems from beyond marriage

[Psychology](#), [Success](#)



To the modern married woman, nothing assures her of success in her career more than the support she receives from her husband in the pursuit of her career goals. While this kind of support is not always assured, the freedom to pursue her goals without any limitations from her husband works just as well.

In fact, women have proved that they can multitask between marriage and a successful career. The medieval idea that a woman is only useful for reproduction purposes once she gets married does not hold water anymore. Through the ages, women have proven their resilience at defying all odds and proving to the world that they are worth more than the domestic roles they were given at marriage.

Throughout history, the role of married women as wives, mothers and housekeeper was of much importance both to them and to the family unit. In Judaism, these roles received respect and were the basis for the exemption of women from time barred commandments (Jones, M. 1999). Accordingly, the role that the woman played was given overriding significance to fulfilling commandments.

Anti-feminists have over time used the exemption rule that Jewish women enjoyed to state that in actual sense the rule was a prohibition that women should not perform commandment. Although they are the epitome of feminine liberation, many people may not know that Jewish women have overtime fought for their liberation by quoting phrases that favor their position in the society from the Talmud (Jones, M. 1999).

Such rules allow them to perform commandments that are not time restricted. However, the detractors argue that even though they are recognized, as worth some services, they are not as highly rated as their male counterparts. To this, the women argue that the role a wife does not revolve around the synagogue. Many women hold this role in high regards and as a basis of fighting their critics.

To understand the situation that women had to contend with through the centuries, one needs to look at the evolution of marriage through the times.

In the older days, marriage for women was out of lack of a better thing they could engage their time in all areas of life. Women were disadvantaged and never gained the skills required to lead successful lives without the support of the socially advantaged male figure.

In most cases, women had no control over certain like education, as their roles were purely reserved for domestic duties. Early in life, young girls were taught that their sole purpose was marriage and child bearing (Gordis, D. H. 2008).

When they were ripe of age, and considering that, the society had created a dependant mentality in them, the women were under pressure to get a suitable husband and get married. Ideally, the man was supposed to provide for the woman and any dependants that resulted from the relationship.

The woman's social standing was so low such that they would be used to secure business transactions. Accordingly, the fathers were at liberty to sell

their daughters to whoever pleased them, whether the woman liked the man they were being sold off to or not.

The 17th century however had better things for women. They begun to exert more power to the men and consequently demanded for more freedoms.

They begun to resist marriage through coercion and instead put their personal happiness beyond the pressure from family and the society. Though the start was shaky, the wars that hit America in 1775 and 1812 led to the rise of a more liberal group of women, who took the roles that their husbands and still brought food to the table as well as handling their regular domestic chores.

It has always been a common view for women to be seen as the source of human life- something they take pride in. The problem is that with this view come other negative thoughts too.

Good examples are thoughts expressed by Thomas Aquinas, a theologian in the 13th century who said that men can be assisted by fellow men in other things except in conception. For this reason, he referred to women as men's helpmate and defined her unique role as conception.

A Latin Church founder in the 4th century, St. Jerome also cast demeaning aspersion to women just like Thomas Aquinas did. To Jerome however, women were the devil's gate. In fact, his sentiments were so string that he believed that women were the only way to wickedness and thus to him they were no more than perilous objects that men had to be wary of (Hooker, R. 1996).

Naturally, women are considered the weaker sex, a fact that continued to perpetuate their low position in society. Because they were not as masculine as their male counterparts, they were relegated domestic chores such as milking cows, tending the children, drawing water and washing clothes.

Men were oblivious of the fact that the energy required to do the collective household chores was even more than some of the hard labor than would do in the fields. The psychological tolerance that women developed while attending to such chores was to benefit them years later when the oppression against them by men became too much to bear.

The “woman’s place is in the home” stereotype is a result of their biological role as birth givers. Before the 16th century, women did not express themselves in a way to portray that they were tired of the status quo. Instead, they submissively obeyed everything that the male figures in their lives would tell them to do. These male figures could be anybody from their fathers, husbands, brothers or cousins.

The American Culture

Women present in the colonial America –whether black, natives or Hipic- all had one common characteristic; they all obeyed the dictates of their husbands, fathers, brothers or masters. It was not until later when British Settlers enlighten the view of these women and by indicating to them that men did not necessarily have to be rulers over them.

A point in the case of John Locke, an English philosopher who was also renowned as an enlightenment thinker and played a major role in informing

the American women that they had individual identities and needed to care for 'the self' Shultz, S. K and Tishler W. P. 2003, pg 45).

The American culture was such that a woman had no property rights. They could not sue, nor be sued and had no right to vote, divorce or speak on behalf of the family unit. It was until the 19th century that women gained rights to divorce and vote.

The right to vote was granted to them through the passing of the 19th amendment in 1919. Eleven years earlier, women's efforts to have a day set in their honor, which they wanted to name Mother's day, had been rejected by the senate on the grounds that the day would demean motherhood (Shultz, S. K and Tishler W. P. 2003 pg52).

The American Revolution which lasted for the better half of the 18th century was an eye opener for most women. One of the outstanding factors is that women's roles at home changed. This because they were required to instill thoughts of patriotism to their children during a time when the husbands were out fighting the Britons.

The absence of a male figure at home also contributed to more liberal wife-husband relationship. When the economic fortunes took a turn for the worse, women invariably took jobs formally reserved for men to earn extra money for household use. In rare cases, they would run the family businesses (Hartman, M. 1996 pg 44).

Surprisingly though, the little gains that American women had made during this time only worsened men subordination towards them especially

because they figured that women were threatening their roles as the head of household. Worse still, the laws saw to the disenfranchising and subordination of women both socially and legally (Lewis 2000).