

Changing gender roles, expectations, attitudes



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Over the years it has become more than evident that the shift in gender roles pertaining to the family and the different viewed societal responsibilities of each parent has drastically changed. Granted, that it can never be totally disregarded that there are still quite a number of stereotypes that women, and, men included, are still experiencing regularly. The deviation of gender roles as currently manifested in today's society has become vague in many respects. Ultimately, it is still dependent upon the availability of choice which becomes the definitive fundamental for each of the parents in this day and age. And this choice is what marks itself as progressive in how gender roles are looked upon in modern times.

A friend who was a recent divorcee prompted Judy Brady to attempt to answer the question why would anyone want a wife. " I want a wife who will work and send me to school. And while I am going to school, I want a wife to take care of my children," (Brady, p. 380). The wife is necessary for the man to ensure that harmony in accordance to how he perceives it is attained as he returns to the normal routine he is accustomed to. This accounts for the necessity and the convenience of having a wife in the pursuit of consensus within a traditional household before.

Brady's characterization of the wife as exemplified in her essay " Why I want a Wife" is quite point blank and resounding of the reality of the role of women in the family as the one who nurtures and oversees the overall welfare of the family. It is still widely read today, decades after its publication because it still contains a vast degree of reality even in today's evolved modern life. There is the paradox of the woman who becomes a wife and evidently becomes a mother, who in the process loses her independence and consequent financial stability. The career of the woman is then

compromised as she is delineated to the caring of the home and in ensuring the satisfaction of her husband. That a majority of women are classified as wives and as mothers (Brady, p. 380).

But years after this, as showcased in Glenn Sacks article, there is now a new category wherein the fathers take over what is usually a relative female role in the home. From the commonly accepted 'setup' where the wife cooks as the husband goes to work, the old definition of gender roles has now become loose. More and more women are now opting to have a career simultaneous with raising a family. There is though truth to what Sacks is saying regarding the real status of working mothers. " Mom is #1 not because of biology or Gods law but because mom is the one who does most of the child care." He himself has proven this, as he is the primary parent who attends to the children. Then it is him, the Stay-At-Home-Dad (SAHD) who provides the security blanket for the children. It may be that the woman carried the child in her womb for nine months but it is still whoever is most present on a daily basis that becomes the main catalyst in the shaping and molding of a child's life. In the middle of the night when their child needed attention, it is not the mother whom the child seeks but the ' yaddy' (or Glenn Sacks) who constantly cares for the child. (Sacks, 384).

A dilemma also arises where it is now not only the men, as from decades ago that hinders the growth of the woman and her career but also the knowledge that when she pursues a profession, she is also losing valuable time in the rearing and bonding with her children. Because of the accepted view of men as providers, they, as husbands have become intently focus on their careers, as this is how most women still view their husbands should be (Sacks, p. 383). It has become acceptable for a man to be intermittently absent in the

life of his children as he is perceived to be working to provide for his family financially while the wife is there constantly to provide emotionally. This is no longer true if it is the woman who becomes the breadwinner for the household as exemplified in many families these days.

The SAHDs or the Stay-at-home-dads remain a few breed but they are more accepted today than ever before. They are those who are willing to give up their 'macho image' and let their wives climb the business ladders as they become house husbands. There are both positive and negative aspects to consider in both options. Whether it will be a conventional family where the father works as the mother stays at home, or both of them will work or the third option where it will be the father who will stay at home. Whichever way a family may belong to, the most important remains that it is a choice and that both the husband and the wife willingly accepted the roles they have instigated upon themselves, regardless of their gender. With this they will realize that it is incumbent upon whichever role absolutely makes them happy with the fewest compromises. This generation, as it is more tolerant and unrestricted in terms of gender roles provides for this trend to be acceptable and practical.

Works Cited

Brady, Judy. "Why I Want A Wife." Kirszner and Mandell 380-382.

Sacks, Glenn. "Stay-At-Home Dads." Kirszner and Mandell 382-385.