

# Gender roles in michael crichton's prey argumentative essay examples

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



It has been widely accepted for numerous decades now that women are meant to nurture their children, do the housework, stay at home, and be perfect housewives, having everything and everyone in the household settled and contented. Men, on the other hand, are expected to provide for their families, be the ones who discipline children and the sole responsible for fixing things around the house. When that balance is kept and each gender plays their "role" well, everything works clockwise and societies treat that particular household, where everything is in order and each gender does the things that are expected to do, favorably and with appreciation. Michael Crichton's "Prey" puts a direct challenge to those fixed gender roles and demonstrates a profound reverse in gender roles, followed by the devastating results of them. To Crichton, when mom becomes a career woman, consequences always hurt and domestic harmony is seriously jeopardized.

It appears that in Jack and Julia's household gender roles have completely reversed and Jack is a self-called house-husband, wearing an apron and reading Redbook magazine, who cares for the children, keeps the family together and does the chores a woman is supposed to do. He even bares the same worries women and mothers at home have, when they realize that being a full-time parent is nothing like fun and easy work. He says, "I was startled to see how soft I looked around the gut. I hadn't realized. [] Not because I was depressed. I was busy with the kids, and tired a lot of the time. I just didn't feel like exercising, that was all" (Crichton 106). Julia, on the other hand, works a lot and stays away from home for too many hours that cause dispute in the household. Jack says, "When are you here? When

was the last time you made it for dinner, Julia? Not last night, not the night before, not the night before that. Not all week, Julia. You are not here" (Crichton 86), which indicates that the mom's decision to work has started gathering dark clouds, threatening their family structure. Of course, when Jack goes back to work, he is the hero of the day, when all this time Julia was an escape goat being punished for choosing to go after a career, just like her husband did. Unfortunately, if Julia is used to represent the fight for equal gender roles, she has probably failed miserably, since she is not a good mother, nor a good wife and ultimately loses prestige in her workplace. However, Julia's intense and gradually elevated need to work longer hours as time flies, hides a dark secret. Technological advancements, like the nano-particles she has been working on, have not only become her obsession, but she has also started to nurture her very own creations, the swarms, and giving them life, HER life.

The side effects of Julia's Frankenstein-like experiments have affected her personal life and feelings. Julia is demonstrated as a frightening paradigm, with scenes where she is abusive towards her baby daughter, Amanda, when the latter does not stay still to have her diaper changed, which is a direct deviation from Julia's long hours at work. Or is it not? Could it be that the project she has devoted excessive amounts of time, to have "judged" that Julia is better off with masculine attributes and somehow control her behavior? Could it be that Julia is aware that something is not right inside her and tries to shake it off and protect her family from it too? It is true that she showers every night when she gets back from work, probably as a means to keep her family safe from getting infected from her nano-experiments, even

though Jack perceived her behavior as shameful and a way to hide her being with another man. It seems that her role as a mother is struggling to get a hold of something and not be taken over male typical behaviors. However, the swarm that had taken over her, have adopted behaviors that represented Julia in the past, and has nothing to do with present. For example, when Ellen arrives, Julia talks about her children's activities, without even knowing what she is talking about, since her children have dropped out of the particular activities long ago. So, Julia's behavior is just a reflection of what the swarm considered to be the most appropriate behavior for a woman, that of a nurturing and affectionate mother that runs the household. Again, being a working woman and a mother collide.

Society penalizes Jack for breaking tradition and embracing a woman's "role". Indicatively, when he enters and sits to wait in the pediatrician's office, he is repeatedly ignored by the other mothers waiting there too. The interesting part is that Jack has started to come to terms with such behaviors and be marginalized in an indirect way. He says, " I was getting used to this. A guy at home, a guy in a setting like a pediatrician's office, was an unusual thing" (Crichton 44). Mothers also waiting at the pediatrician's office probably feel strange and uncomfortable with Jack's presence, as it was completely unlike a man to be seen waiting in such a place, where women "belong". They even make fun of Jack, perhaps attempting to ease their suspicion and restore the proper gender role behavior. By defying the traditional conventions of his gender role, Jack accepts societal discrimination.

Reversed gender roles in " Pray" are also highlighted when Jack is worried

about his wife having an affair. His lawyer advises him to go after building a case against his wife, because “ the courts will see you as dissatisfied and possibly resentful of your working spouse” (Crichton 111), which once again portrays injustice. The court will favor Jack’s case on the grounds of him staying at home and not be working. Of course, the biased court system is projected right at this point, since Ellen strongly believes that Julia stands much more chance to gain custody of her children, despite the fact she is abusive to her children and neglects her family.

Men also dislike the fact that one of them is performing a woman’s role. In fact, they feel embarrassed talking about women-like things, such as diapers. A representative example is when Jack goes to the supermarket and bumps into his friend Ricky they would start talking about diapers, laughing at the fact that they probably sounded like a commercial. However, the joyful atmosphere changes when a woman passed them by. They immediately change subject and then, Ricky said loudly, “ So hey, how about those Giants” (Crichton38).

Finally, even the nanos adopt the gender roles. Julia is a mother that appeared nurturing at the beginning of the novel; however, she has not been anything like that ever since. Being affectionate to her children is something she seems to have forgotten and even when she claims to have stayed up all night worrying about Amanda’s medical condition, she is never seen nurturing or holding Amanda in her hands. When nanos notice the difference in Julia’s behavior, they are alarmed. The father of the house is the person the kids are most used to fulfilling the gap of the mother, which is why the children show reluctance and unwillingness to being told what to do by their

mother, a woman. The father figure is dominant and the mother figure has simply faded away slowly in time, due to the mother's own decisions. That is the reason why nanos eventually blow up their cover. In " Pray", the black swarm covering Julia represented her choice to work, her superfluous ambitions and it all comes to one: a working mother loses a great part of her life and eventually ceases to exist as a woman and mother, as well as a whole person. What people thought of being Julia, is nothing but nano-particles taking over her, nurturing from her and adopting the characteristic traits she had inside her, turning them over to more masculine-like. They live parasitically on Julia's body as their host and force her to slowly die from the inside out. At first, Julia would teach the nanos, which is why they come off more like a feminine program that assist Julia in being a good mother. The nano-particles try to adopt Julia's feminine characteristics and since they consider Julia as nurturing, they try to show affection on to her children. However, Julia's bizarre behavior forces nanos to blow their cover. When Jake finds out the striking truth and manages to shake off the nano-particles of Julia, he has nothing but a pale cadaverous form of what used to be his wife. When the nano-particles are removed, Julia gains back her motherly figure and becomes the affectionate mother everybody used to remember and expected from her. Unfortunately, she has no hope. Her career has eaten her alive and she is in the point of paying up for her wrong doings and sins. Good motherhood and working woman appear to be exclusive for once again. Julia's struggle for independence and bringing gender equality has been adopted by the swarm, as it appears that what the swarm really wants in the end is to be set free and live in a host of their choosing. Nevertheless, Julia

has allowed the nanos to evolve, when she chose to let some nanos out in the wild to force them to adopt in their environmental new stimuli and survive. However, there is no place for two types of swarms: the host-based and the ones living in the wild, and there is room for only one type. For that reason, the wild ones are exterminated and the host-based survived, free to adopt any human characteristics and traits they feel like it. That is exactly how Julia has been feeling inside for a long time, and this is why she is trying to make a difference to the world, breaking standardized behaviors and attitudes.

Michael Crichton's "Prey" has become a platform to demonstrate the negative, and in this case devastating, effects of women reversing their roles with men in an attempt to achieve gender equality. When a woman does the things societies have accepted to be men-distinguishing and vice versa, families run a serious risk. Family structure and harmony are disturbed and, in Jack and Julia's household, completely fractured. People just appear unprepared to move to more radical societal structures, where men and women can equally work without causing chaos to their family peace. Julia's sole devotion to becoming independent and proving that women can indeed performed reversed gender roles, had tragically become her doom and killed her. Other than that, technology played a significant role in reversing gender roles. Definitely, the main reason behind Julia's strange behavior that demonstrated many masculine traits, are the nanos. The nano-tech program was created to be able to evolve based on the environmental stimuli it encountered. The nano-swarm comprising of nano-particles have the ability to not only evolve, but do anything necessary to maintain in life. For that

reason, they can do estimation on their own, respond to various stimuli and even use food in order to replicate. Eventually, the whole process makes them a completely living organism without any emotions whatsoever, when the swarm is in cloud-state. They can replicate themselves and invade other organisms to acquire the necessary nutrients to grow. That is why, when they invaded Julia and decided to use her as their host, she lost her feminine side and turned from a loving and caring mother into a woman that neglects her children and is distant with her husband. The nanos took all emotion and gave her features that were not like her at all.

## **Works Cited**

Crichton Michael (2002). " Prey". Book. Harper Collins Publishers. United States.