

# four stages of marriage relationships essay sample

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The Idea of equality also affects the relationships between husbands and wives. Women have witnessed steady progress toward equal status for themselves in the family and in society at large. According to Letha and John Scanzoni, two American sociologists, the institution of marriage in the USA has experienced four stages of development. In Each new stage, wives have increased the degree of equality with their husbands and have gained more power within the family. Stage I: Wife as Servant to her Husband. During the 19th century American wives were expected to be completely obedient to their husbands. As late as 1850, wife beating was legal in almost all the states of the United States. Although both husbands and wives had family duties, the wife had no power in family matters other than that which her husband allowed her. Her possessions and any of her earnings belonged to her husband. During the 19th century women were not allowed to vote, restriction that in part reflected women's status as servant to the family. Stage II: Husband-Head, Wife-Helper.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries opportunities for women to work outside the household increased. More wives were now able to support themselves, if necessary, and therefore were less likely to accept the traditional idea that wives were servants who must obey their husbands. Even though the great majority of wives chose not to work outside the home, the fact that they might do so increased their power in the marriage. The husband could no longer make family decisions alone and demand that the wife follow them. The wife was freer to disagree with her husband and to insist that her views be taken into account in family decisions. Even though the wife's power increased, the husband remained the head of the family.

The wife became his full-time helper by taking care of his house and raising his children. She might strongly argue with him and sometimes convince him, but his decision on family matters was usually final. This increase in equality of women in marriages reflected increased status for women in the society at large and led to women's gaining the right to vote in the early 20th century. The husband-head, wife-helper marriage is still frequently found in the United States. Economic conditions in the 20th century however, have carried many marriages into different stages. Stage III: Husband-Senior Partner, Wife-Junior Partner. During the 20th century more and more wives took jobs outside the home. In 1940, for example, only 14 per cent of married women in the United States held jobs outside the home. By 1980 more than 50 per cent did so.

When married women take this step, according to Letha and John Scanzoni, their power relative to that of their husbands increases still further. The wife's income becomes important in maintaining the family's standard of living. Her power to affect the outcome of family decisions is greater than when her duties were entirely in the home. Although she has become a partner, however, she is still not an equal partner with her husband, since his job or career still provides most of the family income. He is therefore, the senior partner and she is the junior partner of the family enterprise. Even though she has a job, it has a lower priority than her husband's. If, for example, the husband is asked to move to advance his career, she will give up her job and seek another in a new location. In the late 50s and early 60s most marriages were either the husband-head or husband-senior partner

type, but the latter was becoming more typical as more wives took jobs outside the home in the United States.

That was due partly to the desire of American women for greater economic opportunity, but the main reason seemed to be that in the last ten years it had become increasingly difficult for families to maintain their standard of living in the face of rising inflation and declining abundance. Most American families simply couldn't make ends meet on just one income. More than any other factor, the need to maintain a good standard of living made the husband-senior partner, wife-junior partner, the typical form of American marriage in the mid-sixties. Stage III: Husband- Wife - Equal Partners. Since the late 1960s a growing number of women had already experienced a strong dissatisfaction with any marriage arrangement wherein the husband and his career were the primary considerations in the marriage.

By the end of the 1970s, for instance, considerably less than half of the women in the United States (38 per cent) still believed they had to put their husbands and children ahead of their own careers. More and more American women came to believe that they had every right to be equal partners rather than junior partners in their marriages. According to the sociologists, this fourth stage of marriage, although not typical of most American marriages in the 1970s, would obviously grow rapidly in the future. In an equal partnership marriage, the wife pursues a full-time job or career which has equal importance to her husband's. The long-standing division of labor between husband and wife comes to end.

The husband is no longer the main provider of family income, and the wife no longer has the main responsibilities for household duties and raising children. Husband and wife share all these duties equally. The rapid change in women's attitudes toward marriage in the 1970s reflected rapid change in the larger society. The Women's Liberation movement appeared in the late 1960s, demanding an end to all forms of sexual discrimination against females. An Equal Rights Amendment to the U. S. Constitution was proposed which would make any form of discrimination on the basis of sex illegal, and though it had failed to be ratified, it had millions of supporters.

Are Gender Roles in Relationships Reversing? / Thu, Apr 12, 2012 2: 14

Written by Mona Lisa Macalino

Women are no longer relegated to being housewives - but that doesn't mean we're equal. Stay-at-home dads and breadwinning moms may be the norm soon, predicts Liza Mundy in her new book, *The Richer Sex*. She points out that "almost forty percent of U. S. working wives now outearn their husbands," and that traditional gender roles are a thing of the past. It's not surprising, given that society's view of women has rapidly changed in the past century. Hello, right to vote and Samantha Jones (one of the main characters in *Sex and the City*, an American television romantic sit-com)! But what does this mean for relationships?

According to Mundy, a "Big Flip" in gender roles is inevitable and the dynamics of male-female relationships will change drastically. Women will have increased power and will no longer see sex as a way to get a man to commit (and when was that the norm, anyway?) Mundy cites that younger

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women are having sex with more partners and “ are becoming the gender that wants sex more than men do.” Well, I really don’t know about all of that – if anything, I think that men and women have always wanted to have sex the same amount, women are just better at expressing it now – but I can speak for the change in gender roles and expectations in relationships, especially in contrast to my grandparents’ relationships, and even my parents’. Financially, the women in my family have either out-earned or made an equal amount of money to their spouses at this point.

Women in my family do it all – they have careers, make money, cook meals, run the household, shuttle kids to and from school, balance bank accounts and mortgages, and of course, navigate gracefully through complicated social politics. Sounds like most women today, right? Interestingly enough though, in my family, the “ power” has still always been in favor of men, simply because they are the “ man of the house.” I wonder if that will still hold true for women of my generation and beyond – will men be expected to act a certain way (i. e. manly), just because they are men? Plus, we’re all still watching romantic comedies where men “ save” women who either don’t have any direction in life until their prince comes along or are career-hungry “ bitches” who “ need” a man to see that romance isn’t dead after all. And Disney still churns out (or re-releases) their stories of princesses being saved by princes. The idea of what a male-female relationship “ should be” is still deeply ingrained in our society. Will this change soon?

Male-female income difference, also referred to as the “ gender gap in earnings” in the United States, and as the “ gender wage gap”, the “ gender

earnings gap”, “ gender income difference” and the “ gender pay gap”, refers usually to the ratio of female to male median yearly earnings among full-time, year-round (FTYR) workers. The statistic is used by government agencies and economists, and is gathered by the United States Census Bureau as part of the Current Population Survey. In 2010 the median income of FTYR workers was \$42, 800 for men, compared to \$34, 700 for women. The female-to-male earnings ratio was 0. 81, slightly higher than the 2008 ratio. The female-to-male earnings ratio of 0. 81 means that, in 2009, female FTYR workers earned 19% less than male FTYR workers.

The statistic does not take into account differences in experience, skill, occupation, education or hours worked, as long as it qualifies as full-time work. However, in 2010, an economist testified to the U. S. Congress Joint Economic Committee that studies “ always find that some portion of the wage gap is unexplained” even after controlling for measurable factors that are assumed to influence earnings. The unexplained portion of the wage gap is attributed by some to gender discrimination. The extent to which discrimination plays a role in explaining gender wage disparities is somewhat difficult to quantify, due to a number of potentially confounding variables.

However, at least one study has shown that discriminatory disparities, where they do exist, grow as men and women’s careers progress. One economist testified to Congress that hundreds of studies have consistently found unexplained pay differences which potentially include discrimination.

Another criticized these studies as insufficiently controlled, and opined that men and women would have equal pay if they made the same choices and

had the same experience, education, etc. Other studies have found direct evidence of discrimination. For example, fewer replies to identical resumes with female names and more jobs went to women when orchestras moved to blind auditions. In 2007, women's earnings were lower than men's earnings in all states and the District of Columbia according to the Income, Earnings, and Poverty Data From the 2007 American Community Survey by the Census Bureau. The national female-to-male earnings ratio was 77.5%.

In the South, five states (Maryland, North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, and Texas) and the District of Columbia had ratios higher than the national ratio, as did three states in the West (California, Arizona, and Colorado). Two states in the Northeast (Vermont and New York) had ratios higher than the national ratio. There were no states in the Midwest that had ratios higher than the national ratio. As a result, women's earnings were closer to men's in more states in the South and the West than in the Northeast and the Midwest. According to an analysis of Census Bureau data released by Reach Advisors in 2008, single childless women between ages 22 and 30 were earning more than their male counterparts in most United States cities, with incomes that were 8% greater than males on average. This shift is driven by the growing ranks of women who attend colleges and move on to high-earning jobs.