

Philosophy of Love and Sex

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Introduction

Kristen Hatch provides a critical insight into feminism in her article “Girl meets Boy”. This paper examines women’s need for career and family, the work & family balance, and the role of changing attitudes. My point of view supports Kristen Hatch’s ideas concerning the need for women’s participation in the workplace rather than embracing domesticity.

The Need for Career and Family

In the early 19th century, there was a general view that women should only participate in domestic chores, while men were the breadwinners for their families. This view continued well into the turn of the 20th century. Single women would participate in the labor market but could only venture to specific careers for women. Motherhood was the most important role for women in the early period. In addition, there were limited educational opportunities for women, with education being a reserve for men. In the early period, women were considered inferior to men in terms of their intellectual capabilities. As such, they could not engage in forms of work that require intellectual or muscular development. While the societal norms in the earlier period restricted women to household chores, contemporary research indicates that women lead happier lives when they engage in productive activities (Hoffning & Williams, 2013). Participation of women in the labor force gives women’s lives value or meaning beyond childbearing and rearing.

Some of the past researchers aim at establishing the motherhood, career, and marriage expectations for women. In a study conducted between 1993 and 2009, and involving a sample of 200 women, the findings indicate that majority of women would prefer to pursue a career, enter in marriage, and have kids. By 2009, 91% of the respondents had entered in marriage.

Another 75 percent had entered motherhood while 57% were mothers and had full time employment (Hoffning & Williams, 2013). The study indicates that majority of women want to achieve all, that is, they want to get pursue a career, get married, and enter motherhood. The findings also indicate that mothers had a higher satisfaction rates compared to women who were still childfree. Majority of women who had quit their jobs to become homemakers expressed a great desire to return to active employment. This research indicates that women can achieve success in the boardroom as well as in the bedroom.

Women who have it all (career, marriage, parenthood) stand a better chance of acquiring more social opportunities and social capital, which ultimately improves their satisfaction levels. As the women acquire more roles, they are able to improve individual skills, develop additional social support, and increase self-worth. Women engaging in the three are able to gain and transfer or share knowledge and apply it in a different area. For instant, management skills learned at work can enhance family life. Women are able to use their income to improve the living standards for their family. Self-esteem gained from either employment or being married can enhance family life by nurturing positivity. Thus, it is important that women pursue careers and enter into motherhood as this increase their satisfaction levels. Women are also develop high esteem levels from achieving the three items in life.

Available literature indicates that both men and women benefit from acquiring multiple roles in the society. Women engaging in full-time employment and parenthood are able to gain various financial, social, and emotional benefits. In a study to establish the impact of engaging in multiple roles among men and women, Hyde (2001) concludes that both men and women can gain enormous benefits (as cited in Hoffning & Williams, 2013). These benefits range from improved physical health, better emotional health or stability, and quality relationship between

spouses. The study further asserts that involvement of men in family affairs significantly improves their overall wellbeing, while involvement of women in employment improves their overall wellbeing. These findings support Hatch's assertions that women are happier when they are engaged in employment.

There are other benefits associated with acquiring multiple roles. A major benefit is the added income that greatly enhances the quality of life. Women who participate in the labor force are able to earn an income, which supplements the family income. Women engaged in employment have an added advantage of social support. Women who achieve success in the workplace are able to exploit fully their potential talents. The consensus is that participation of women in the labor industry generally improves their livelihoods as well as the wellbeing of their families. This is contrary to some earlier studies, which according to Hatch suggest that women receive more satisfaction when primarily performing household duties such as child rearing. Thus, the need for women's participation in the labor market cannot be downplayed.

Involvement in multiple roles may on the other hand, lead to development of increased stress levels among individuals. Nonetheless, particular factors reduce stress levels. Being in a relationship is one of the factors that reduce stress levels resulting from multiple roles. Another important factor is presence of children, which also contributes lower stress levels. The study findings indicate that those who do not have children had higher episodes of strain symptoms compared with those who had children. The study echoes the late 20th century view on marriage and career where men and women were expected to find happiness from their personal lives (Hoffning & Williams, 2013). Raising children is a noble task that greatly enriches the lives of parents. However, child rearing requires commitment and resources. Child rearing may take too much time for career women and in such cases acting as a barrier to success.

Balancing Career and Family

With an increasing number of women participating in the workforce, majority are facing new form of challenges, mainly balancing their career and family demands. In the 1980s, women began increasingly participating in the labor force. The expectations were that women should not only enter marriage but also pursue successful careers and contribute to the financial stability of the family. As Hatch contends, women were increasingly facing challenges common among working-class women in the 1900s. Due to challenges of achieving a suitable work/family balance, majority of women felt strained. Some women opted in pursuing careers and in delaying marriage or parenthood. The struggle to balance family and career led to increased stress and emotional fatigue among the working women. In contrast, men have a relatively easier time balancing career and family since they are much absolved from most of the household chores.

Balancing career and family has been common among men since the earlier period. However, in women, it was a new phenomenon at the turn of the 20th century. Prior to 1960s, women aspired to work in “female occupations” that were family friendly. Some of these careers include nursing, hairdressing, teaching, laundry, and other professions mainly in the service industry. These occupations had lower mean average wages compared to occupations regarded suitable for men. Women in the traditional occupations or the so-called family friendly occupations report less conflict in their work/family balance. In the 1980s, a fundamental shift occurred in the nature of occupational interest among young people. An increasing number of women began enrolling in male dominated career fields such as medicine, law, engineering, and other careers. This gave rise to conflicts in maintaining a balance between family and career.

In a study by Gerson (2010) to determine the career and family expectations for college seniors, the findings indicate that women placed little emphasis on family compared to careers

(as cited in Hoffning & Williams, 2013). College seniors thus place more importance on developing their careers compared to family. However, the study findings may have been skewed since the focus of this category of students is growing their careers. Another study conducted by Deutsch, Kokot, and Binder (2007) among a socioeconomically diverse group of respondents provides contradicting results of the earlier study involving college seniors. The findings indicate that majority of respondents emphasized on career and family as key to achieving satisfaction in life. Most of the respondents desire to enter in relationships that can also enable them maintain gender-role flexibility. Both men and women perceive various challenges to achieving work/family balance, given the nature of the current corporate environment that emphasizes competition.

Although pursuing a career may pose challenges to marriage life, the benefits derived far outweigh the costs. Moreover, family size has declined considerably over the last half century. Reduced family size increases the ability of individuals to balance career and family. This is because parents have fewer children to look after compared to the earlier period. Smaller families also enable parents to provide higher standards of living among the few children. In addition, women pursuing careers are able to contribute to the gross earnings of the entire family. This increases the living standards. However, early marriage may undermine a woman's educational attainment and hence the likelihood of obtaining employment. Early marriage leads to early childbearing, which interferes with women's education and career plans. Younger women are more susceptible to strain and may not be able to cope with the additional workload of child rearing while continuing with their education.

In the modern world, women can comfortably pursue higher education and still support families. In the early 1990s, a large number of well-educated women (those holding graduate and

professional degrees) opted to remain childless. According to Hoffning & Williams (2013), about 31 percent of well-educated women in 1994 were highly likely to remain childless. This number has significantly declined over the last two decades. Currently, more women having higher education status are getting into marriage and still pursuing a career. The study indicates that only 24 percent of the women in 2008 with higher educational status were likely to remain childless. This indicates that there is increased willingness to have children among women having higher education status. The research also indicates that these women are more likely to have smaller families. This enables them to balance work and family responsibilities. This is in line with Hatch's assertion that modern women should participate in productive activities to earn a living.

The changing attitudes

Attitudes regarding feminism have changed over time. The attitudes held towards gender concerning work greatly determine the nature and type of work that women may engage. Individuals holding a traditionalist perspective towards work hold the view that men are the sole providers to their family while women are involved in child rearing. In the contemporary society, egalitarian values have emerged and become more acceptable across various societies. The egalitarian perspective is in favor of enhancing social equality (Deutsch, Kokot, & Binder, 2007). As such, men and women hold an equal place in the society. Both should work to contribute towards income development of the family. The egalitarian perspective asserts that women should not quit their jobs especially when their children are at a tender age. This helps ensure that women remain financially independent and contribute towards the growth of the family.

The egalitarian values require men to be active participants in the child rearing process. This ensures that mothers do not bear the total weight of the child rearing process (Deutsch, Kokot, & Binder, 2007). The fathers are expected to take leave or to decrease their total working hours in order to assist with child rearing. This is contrary to the earlier period where fathers would increase the number of hours they worked in order to cater for the entire family. Participation of fathers in the child rearing process ensures that women can handle multiple roles. Women benefit more when they are in employment, especially in situations where they enjoy the type of work they do. Mothers and fathers who embrace egalitarian principles are more likely to receive benefits of multiple roles. The changing attitudes reflect the need for women's participation in the workplace as Hatch highlights. Currently, men are in favor of women participating in the labor force, which reflects a change of attitude from the traditionalist perspective.

The type of care a mother may wish to accord the child also determine women's participation in the workforce. Attitudes determine the type of care a mother provides for the child. For instance, traditional women are likely to put the needs of the child first before career (Deutsch, Kokot, & Binder, 2007). As such, they are likely to prefer quitting jobs in order to provide the best possible care to their kids. An egalitarian mother who greatly values her career may prefer having some form of arrangement for taking care of the child. Such mothers may place their children in daycare centers to enable them continue with their careers. Women who prefer taking care of their children have similar attitudes with traditional women who prefer personally taking care of their children. On the other hand, women who take their children to daycare centers have reduced anxiety levels regarding the physical separation from their children.

Over the recent past, there has been a change in attitude by men towards marrying career women who could be earning equal or higher amount. In the modern world, women are achieving high educational status in various professions previously dominated by men. The critical question is how do such changes affect marriage? Contrary to expectations, recent studies indicate that financially independent women are more likely to stay in marriage. This indicates that career women are not a threat to the married institution and neither to their husbands. Recent statistics show that about 33 percent of marriages, women are better educated comparing to their partner (Parker-Pope, 2010). Nonetheless, men on average still earn more compared to women. In 2010, 22 percent of women were the primary breadwinners to their families compared to 7% who were breadwinners in 1970. This shows the great change in attitude towards women and pursuit of higher education and careers.

The dynamic change in socioeconomic role of mothers and fathers may take some time to adapt. Nevertheless, the change surprisingly results to more sustained marital stability. Current research indicates that the dynamic shifts – women denouncing domesticity and men embracing house chores – have on average contributed to more stable marriage unions, resulting to lower rates of divorce. In the modern courtship scene, women are likely to hook up with partners who embrace egalitarian values. These are fathers ready to spend more time with their family and to encourage their wives to seek employment. According to Parker-Pope (2010), the shifts in economic roles of men and women are partly driven by the financial pressures of the 20th and 21st century. The rising cost of living has made it impossible for majority of men to cater fully towards their families' income needs. Women supplement the family income through employment. In some cases, women are the breadwinner in their family. This is likely especially when the husband loses his job.

Kristen Hatch examines the impact of the power imbalance that exists when the wives earn more than their husbands do. The research indicates that some men are skeptical about marrying women with higher incomes than they actually make. These men argue that such women are more likely to cheat on them. Current research disputes these myths about career women being more likely to cheat on their husbands. The overall impact of women engaging in careers is that it leads to a fair or equitable union where both partners exercise some degree of freedom in decision-making. However, as Parker-Pope (2010) contends, it is not easy to adapt to the new changes in both men and women. For instance, men find it hard adjusting to their wives' equal influence at home. On the other hand, women also find it hard to forego exclusive decision-making in matters involving domestic chores such as dressing the kids.

Conclusion

In the article, Kristen Hatch disputes myths that career women are more likely to cheat on their husbands. She argues that in the contemporary world where financial challenges have become a reality in most homes, men can no longer afford to be the sole breadwinners. In line with my point of view, she argues that women should refute domesticity and embrace seeking of employment opportunities. Vast volumes of literature available suggest that contrary to expectations, career women are less likely to cheat in their relationship. When both partners are earning, there is enhanced stability in the marriage. Research indicates that majority of women value careers and marriage. Achieving the two increases a woman's satisfaction levels or happiness. The key to successful marriage and career is learning how to balance the two. The research notes that owing to a considerable reduction in family size over time, women are now better equipped to balance family and career. The study also shows that the changing economic

role among men and women is not without challenges, as men and women find it difficult to adapt to the new dynamics of marriage.

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