
Motherhood As One Of The Gender Inequality Roles In The USA

Gender equality is an opportunity for all Americans to grow. Equality is a fundamental human right that needs to be achieved in order for society to reach its full potential. A crucial feature in reaching gender equality is women's empowerment. This includes women having autonomy, freedom, opportunities, power, and self-worth. Despite the rise in women's rights throughout history, women were restricted to gender roles that society deemed appropriate for them. There were only two careers that were viewed to be important to women: a wife and a mother. Being a mother is a women's biological role and is regarded to be their most significant role by society. Frequently, the stereotype that claims women belong at home has hindered the possibility for them to expand their opportunities, yet this has never been an issue for men. In recent years, there have been numerous endeavors taken to bring awareness to this issue. For example, Emma Watson has taken responsibility on addressing the feminist movement and has become the face for HeforShe, a campaign focused on equality (UN Women, par. 4). More recently, at the 76th Golden Globes Awards that took place in January 2019, Glenn Close gave a moving speech regarding feminism (McDermott, par. 3). These public acts highlight the urgent issue that demands to be addressed of gender equality in today's society. The controversy around gender equality has been pertinent in current news due to the aspect of women empowerment that is present in movements such as the Mommy War, #MeToo and the ongoing debate concerning abortions. These movements portray how women are the ones in control of their lives. Through demonstrating the evolution of women in the workforce, the benefits of them working, and their ability to achieve a work-life balance, traditional gender roles should be abandoned.

Feminists and anti-feminists both recognize that there are differences between men and women. Feminists express how these differences do not make one gender superior to the other. However, anti-feminists believe that the feminist movement establishes females as the superior sex. This belief is untrue because feminism is a movement that supports equal opportunity for both genders. Unfortunately, the correct definition of feminism is overshadowed by the perceived definition. The true definition of feminism is "the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes" (UN Women, par. 5). However, the definition perceived by society is that females are the superior sex. A situation similar to the feminist movement in regards of being misconceived is the controversy surrounding Islam. ISIS, is a terrorist organization that claims they follow the ideologies of Islam. Due to the propaganda and fear portrayed by the media, the perceived definition is that Islam is a religion of violence, whereas the true definition is that Islam is a religion of peace. False definitions create a stigma around the issue, resulting in prejudice. As a result, the feminist movement and gender equality suffer, hindering women's emancipation from their societal roles, allowing them to be independent.

Throughout history, the role of women in society has evolved, notably their participation in the workforce, proving that gender roles should be ignored as they impede on equal opportunity for women. Since the beginning, women were expected to stay home to take care of their children and perform household chores, but after World War 2, there was a shift in ideology as women joined the workforce (Shah par. 1 and 4). This gave freedom and opportunity to women that was

not possible for them before. However, after the war ended, men took their jobs back and women were expected to fall back to their “normal” roles. (Shah, par. 5). The sense of freedom that women experienced gave them motivation to participate in the workforce. This foundation has persisted well into the present day, which can be seen in the sharp increase of women entering the workforce. In 1970, “only 40.8 percent of women in the United States over the age of 16 were employed,” (Ziman, par. 7) but in 2000, “that number [grew to] 57.5 percent” (par. 7). Furthermore, “in 2015, women’s overall labor force participation rate (56.7 percent) was about ten percentage points higher than 40 years ago... For mothers, the increase was much steeper... 69.9 percent of mothers with children under age 18 were in the labor force, up from 47.4 percent in 1975” (U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau, p. 1). Over time, women, especially mothers, were breaking away from outdated gender roles by pursuing careers, signaling a shift in past thinking. Gender roles should not define or determine what women are able to do and to effectively fight back, the dismissal of these roles is mandated in order to bridge the enormous gap that is preventing women from achieving equality. Gender roles created by society should be dismissed as it results in the work-life conflict that restricts working mothers from being capable of juggling the work-life balance, with the exception of a few. A survey of working mothers revealed that the majority of the participants believed in “dividing childcare and housework equally with their partners in theory, but few achieved this goal in their day-to-day lives” (Collins, p. 215). Compared to men, women remain to be responsible for caregiving and household duties, which they maintain to do, despite working outside the home as well. Even though there have been discussions concerning the importance of “family members” raising children and caring for the home, this duty continues to fall on women, despite never opening up to the possibility that men can share the role as well. Old family values has created a work-family conflict that inhibits women’s right to equality. The side of society that believes in traditional family values are accountable to correct the issue through shifting away from gender roles and towards the modern movement of women being able to do it all.

Although there have been arguments claiming mothers working harms their children, there are benefits for being a working woman. On the opposing side, it is argued that, “the more emotionally and physically a mother can be present for a child in the first three years, the better the chance that child will be emotionally healthy and mentally well” (Komisar, par. 10). As a result from choosing to work while being a mother, children will face harmful consequences. The idea of a unhealthy baby elicits guilt from prospective mothers in hopes of preventing them from entering the workforce. Research refutes the assertion by explaining how women working actually benefits their family and themselves. However, statistics published by Harvard Business School has concluded that, “daughters of working mothers tend to be higher achieving, work themselves... spend more time with their children than do daughters of women who did not work; men who were raised by working mothers do more household work and help more with child care than sons of stay-at-home moms” (qtd. in Filipovic, par. 25). For women or mothers, “working correlates with better mental and physical health” (Filipovic, par. 24). The research introduces and substantiates the idea that being a working woman or mother is more beneficial than staying home. The evidence raises questions concerning traditional gender roles and how they impede on the wellbeing of children, as well as the ability for women to strive for personal fulfillment, a concept men are able to reach.

In motherhood, a problem mothers face is debating on chasing a career while creating a family. Although the traditional view of women being regarded as housewives is popular in some communities, working mothers have established a more desirable position in today’s society

and have continuously proven to be successful in their work and family life. The US Department of Labor's Women's Bureau acknowledges how despite working, mothers maintain to spend more time on caregiving and household obligations than the father, exhibiting women are capable of achieving a work-life balance (U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau, p. 10-11). Those who support the idea of working mothers have discovered gender roles to be responsible for women not being able to pursue a work-life balance. Opposers of working mothers believe that it is a woman's responsibility to stay at home and fill their established gender and social roles. In any given day, "employed mothers spend more time caring for and helping household children than employed fathers. In addition... working mothers are also more likely to perform household activities than working fathers" (U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau, p. 10). Women continue to shatter gender roles constructed by society through displaying their capability of juggling a work-life balance. Furthermore, there has been an evolution in regards of splitting work and household duties, despite the belief that the traditional roles of father and mother should remain. The first approach, is the traditional role. This is where the father will work and be the breadwinner, while the mother will assume responsibility for caregiving and household duties. The most common approach today is the neo-traditional role (Daily Illini Editorial Board, par. 10). This is where the father remains to be the main breadwinner, but the mother has a part-time job while still being held to her usual obligations as a housewife. The final approach is the egalitarian role. This separates all responsibilities equally between both parents. However, do not be mistaken in believing that one approach is superior the other (Daily Illini Editorial Board, par. 8-12). The only individuals capable of making this inference are those find one to be the most compatible with their work-life decision.

The only way for society to obtain equality, is to dismiss outdated gender roles. By providing facts and statistics on the evolution of women in the workforce, the benefits of them working, and their ability to achieve a work-life balance, it is indicated why traditional gender roles should be abandoned. America was established on the idea of equality and freedom, which are fundamental rights granted to every individual, regardless of gender. However, for women, there has been an issue regarding these rights, as society persistently restricts them to traditional gender roles that declare they fulfill their obligation to stay home and be a housewife. Gender roles must be eliminated, and if neglected to do so, America will have not only betrayed women, but also what it claims to stand for. Achieving equality for women is possible and it all begins with awareness. By accepting the disreputable definition of feminism, society conserves gender roles, denying women their equality. Instead of opposing feminist beliefs, there must be a shift towards embracing the core belief of feminism which is equality for all. This fight needs the participation of every citizen because it is an issue that affects every individual. Join the HeforShe campaign. If change is not taken now, the issue will continue to persist. Emancipate women from the relentless prejudice they have endured. It is time to fight for the future.