

Student's Name
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Course
Date



Interview: Gender Role Socialization

INTRODUCTION

Gender roles can be described as the social and cultural attributes, which a man or a woman should possess as prescribed by the society. Thus, the public dictates what males and females are supposed to do. Gender roles socialization, therefore, refers to the process by which people are socialized into becoming a man or a woman based on the standards of the community that they belong to. Every culture has its threshold of what distinguishes humans between sexes. This paper aims at showing the differences in gender roles between males and females. The interview involved two respondents, one woman aged 65 years old and a man of 42. The questioning focused on the socialization process of both respondents with the purpose of comparing these socialization processes and the resultant gender roles that each of the two sexes was associated with as they grew up. The differences in age between the interviewees is important since it will help in determining the changes that occurred between the generations as well as the gender role in the socialization process.

BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

The two of my respondents who for this essay I shall call Mrs. Mary Clarke

aged 65 and Mr. John Burrows aged 42 (real names are concealed for the purpose of confidentiality) are American citizens. Mary Clarke is a widow, mother, and grandmother. She is a retired teacher and one of the inspirational female leaders in her community. Mrs. Clarke holds the Diploma in Early Childhood Education. In addition, she is African American. Mr. Burrows, on the other hand, is a married man who has three children. Mr. Burrows works as a banker in one of the local banks in Washington. By ethnicity, he is also African American. Thus, these two critical interviewees will help us understand the process of gender role socialization based on their personal experiences provided in this interview.

Mrs. Clarke grew up in Baltimore, in one of the most notorious neighborhoods for crime. She was the third born kid in a family of ten children. Moreover, she was the first of the three girls in her family. Her mother was a housewife, and the father was a preacher in the Baptist church. She was raised with strong Christian values. Her dad was a conservative person who believed in the traditional way of doing things. On the contrary, Mr. Burrows was the first born in the family of five; his father worked as a professor at Howard University in Washington, DC while his mother who was of Mexican origin was a nurse in one of the hospitals in the town. Burrow's father was a man of color and appeared to be one of those few influential African Americans in the USA. Being a professor, he belonged to the middle class.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

During this interview, the researcher administered the questions directly to the respondents to enable keen following of the responses to avoid instances where the interviewees would either misinterpret the query or deviate from answering. Voice recording equipment was used to ensure

that no information was missed from the interview during data analysis. The latter was performed through narrative reports by comparing and contrasting replies of two respondents on the subject as well as giving variations that emanated from the interview. All the information was processed and discussed appropriately.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Mrs. Clarke stated that when was an adolescent in the 1940s and the 1950s, the world was different. At that time women were expected mostly to be at home, care for children and also be good wives to their husbands. She indicated that when she was young, her mother was always at home to babysit her and other siblings. She narrated how the father would insist that her brother should have gone to school to secure the future for them. When it came to the girls, he would have a soft spot with regard to them pursuing education. She claimed that her dad would tell her and the sisters undertake studies but always remember to learn from their mother who had attended to them as a good wife. Mr. Burrows, contrariwise, grew up in the different environment from that of Mrs. Clarke. He asserted that he was reared by the family where both parents were employed, and he never knew anything about gender discrimination. He maintained that his father often encouraged them to respect ladies. Hence, his sisters were taken to good schools and one of them who was the second born, is now an attorney in Washington, DC. Burrows' case may be compared with that of Nathan in the movie *Divide of the Sexes* where Nathan's parents strove to be a perfect couple for their son so that he could grow up as a person devoid of stereotypes. However, it appeared that life worked in another way. At school, Mr. Burrows realized that boys are different from girls in many ways; this is the same scenario where Nathan found himself since the reality dawned on him from the outside world.

She recalled that her dad would always give them quotes from various Bible verses especially from the book of proverbs where he talked about how a child should listen to their parents as well as on the issue of the part of a female in building her home or breaking it. Her father always claimed, "The primary role of a lady in her life was to take care of her home that was the only way she could earn respect and honor from the society." (Quotation of the interviewee). Moreover, these sentiments were strongly supported by the mother who was always submissive to their father.

As she was maturing, Mrs. Clarke remembered that her toys and her brother's ones were different. She was given dolls and indications that she was supposed to be a good mother to her puppet while her elder brother who was just two years older played with Vans, toy guns and models of American soldiers. At school, it was always clear that teachers put more emphasis on the education of boys as compared to girls. The latter were often expected to play second fiddle to male kids. They were not allowed to participate in certain sports. Furthermore, their career choices were limited to nursing, teaching, secretarial among other jobs that were considered mostly feminine. Back then, boys were encouraged to be doctors, engineers, pilots, soldiers, drivers, scientists, etc. The issue of education for lads can also be traced in the movie *Divide of the Sexes* where Tyrese who was overly aggressive but underperformed at school became a source of worry for his mother who considered his male aggression as a factor that might have led him to underachieving in his studies. Anxiety in Tyrese's house is related to the fact that his parents believed that he might have got into gang membership since he is legged behind at school. Consequently, this is the evidence that family expected Tyrese to become what the society prescribed as the right profession for males, and failure to abide by these rules implied that he might have become what unsuccessful during school years men were, according to the community, which is

criminal.

However, this was not the case with Mr. Burrows who grew up at the time when girls assumed more challenging roles and competed favorably with lads. John Burrows stated that when he went to college, the pop culture, which was mainly associated with individualism, had spread over America and was seen as the most modern thing. Females were more concerned about their independence and desire to be successful in all aspects of life.

Mrs. Clarke indicated that during her mid-twenties, the civil rights movements became common and pushed for rights of women and minority groups in the American community. Just then, many changes were introduced. Nevertheless, she asserted that the male dominated society was resistant to the reforms enforced in the society. After graduation from the high school, she got married to her husband at the age of 21, she recalled the relationship with her husband stating that “as a woman, I knew very well my responsibility towards my husband - to be a submissive and obedient wife. These are the ideals I learnt from my parents and I had to take them to my marriage.” (Quotation of the interviewee). Mrs. Clarke worked as a Sunday school teacher in her father's church. Later she received sponsorship to obtain the Diploma in Early Childhood Education as the church wanted to start a private school in order to educate more children. Then she worked as a teacher; furthermore, when the school developed and with the changes that had occurred, she became the headmistress and stayed in that position until she opted to retire five years ago. Even as a pedagogue, she remained devoted to her matrimony. She explained that, “When I started teaching many women were getting themselves involved into careers and divorce rates were growing higher, it was one of those trying times for career women in the US, however, my mother kept advising me on the value of staying married and the honor that

comes with it.” (Quotation of the interviewee).

Mr. Burrows, on the other hand, stated that as he was growing up despite the fact that boys were still encouraged to performed long-established male functions, feminist and civil rights movements created a level ground for both boys and girls. He indicated, “With the active introduction of changes more women adopted the roles that were traditionally considered male”. Burrows confirmed that when females gradually approached the acknowledgement of equal rights they became economically empowered, and therefore, did not see any reasons to continue being submissive to their men. Hence, this caused the problem of divorce since many families were destroyed and the larger amount of girls chose to stay unwed. The world witnessed appearance of single parents, with husbands separated from their wives.

When asked whether there were things Mrs. Clarke felt that she missed as an adolescent that thought she should have now, the woman explained that she had no regrets since she had an opportunity that many girls did not have. In addition, the lady affirmed that she was well contented with the roles she played as a mother and a teacher. She still thinks that the mission of women is to nurture and care for their loved ones. Moreover, she was disappointed with the current crop of females who are busy competing with men and have no respect for the family. She convinced that the former lost track of what God had created them to do, and she assumes that she fulfilled her function to be an obedient wife and a good mother to her children, something that is no longer happening in the society. Contrariwise, Burrows is a great supporter of women independence. He believed in the ideals that his father had imbedded in him and his whole family. Hence, he gave an example of his sister who is a lawyer and had a divorce because the husband was not willing to respect her as an equal. Furthermore, Mr.

Burrows stated that females should be empowered and allowed to adopt identical roles with men. He asserted that, “as a Democrat I am happy with the direction, which America had chosen especially by giving Hillary Clinton the chance to vie for Presidency; this is a good sign that gender equality is finally achieved in the United States” (Quotation of the interviewee). The man expressed his optimism that Clinton was going to win the next elections and this would mean a new dawn for women globally.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to the social learning theory, people acquire their knowledge through observation, or instructions that normally occur in the social context. The latter, in this case, could be at home, at school, in the places of worship or other public places. Children learn a lot by contemplating how the adults perform in the community, and these kinds of activities help in informing, which gender kids will choose. On this basis, therefore, children may be born biologically male or female, but they became masculine or feminine by what they experience in the society. The social learning theory is closely linked to the theory of cognitive development, which focuses on the process how human intelligence progresses; hence, as people observe things in their environment, they internalize lessons and these objects become part of their lives. In many instances, boys will emulate their fathers while girls will resemble their mothers. Thereby kids will learn how to be male or female based on what they see. In the interview, Mrs. Clarke tended to learn more from her mother, and this defined who she could be even at the old age. Mr. Burrows also saw his father as the role model and believed in gender equality just like his dad since he was young. Thus, these lessons stick with the respondents from childhood to adulthood.

The two theories further affirm the influence of the media and family on

children when they grow up as it is shown in the movie *Divide of the Sexes*. Rhianna lived in the dysfunctional family with a father who was a drunkard and a mother who was breadwinner and caregiver; she opted to involve herself with and concentrated on music videos and Bratz dolls appeared to be too mature for her age. It is like she was getting rebellious while watching how her mother handled things as a woman. She hated being a female judging from what she observed at home. On the other hand, Helena embraced her femininity and thought that being a woman made her strong since she was the sole survivor among the triplets who her mother had given birth to.

The modern world has taken a new turn that may seem uncommon to Mrs. Clarke who was growing up at a time when marriage was one of the most important processes in a woman's life. Today, we have single mothers; single businesswomen who do not want to get married, single fathers and so. Besides, these are cultural changes that were not accepted by the previous generation but are the integral part of human life nowadays. Mrs. Clarke did not agree with this arrangement, but it is the truth of the contemporary reality. Mr. Burrows, however, was reared in the society where equality was recognized and respected. He was not surprised by the reforms in the present world since even in his family one of his sisters encountered this reality. Now women are more empowered than a few decades ago and the gap between males and females have reduced significantly.