

## Background and Teacher Lecture Notes for Marital Roles

One of the very important areas you and your spouse will need to adjust to is what each of your marital roles will be. In the past for many centuries, tradition clearly dictated what the male/husband would do and what the female/wife's roles would be. In today's world the rules about roles are not clearly defined and need to be worked out independently by each couple. Since you both came from different family backgrounds with different role expectations, you may each have different ideas about how this is going to work out in your new family. This is something you will need to discuss in detail before you get married, and as time goes on, you may need to adjust or amend your plan as your family needs change.

Have students take "Jacobson Marital Roles" quiz.

Show scoring and Results. Have students raise hands to determine if they are "Traditional" or "Egalitarian".

### MARITAL ROLES CASE STUDIES

TEACHER'S NOTE: Make certain that students understand the difference in the following terms.

**EQUALITARIAN:** Being an equalitarian couple does not mean that the couple does everything together or at the same time. The equalitarian philosophy means that the division of labor is equal but is not necessarily traditional.

**TRADITIONAL:** For many years, roles in marriage were defined as masculine or feminine. That division of labor is what we will call traditional. In today's society this means that the division of labor is most often NOT equal.

#### COUPLE 0

Susan and Mike had been married for nearly 45 years. They were proud to have been married that long. They never really talked about who did what; that was just understood. Susan did all the cooking and cleaning, unless they were in the canyon, and then Mike took over. He made a delicious stew and Dutch oven cooking had become his specialty. The children loved their dad's Dutch oven potatoes. The children had been mostly Susan's responsibility. Mike had not done much with babies except beam when he announced, "Wow, we have got us another son. Think we will name this one after my brother, Jason." It was not until Jason Jr. turned about six that Mike's fathering really began. Now Jason Jr. could play all those games that Mike had always dreamed of playing with his son. They would play catch and wrestle on the lawn. Mike took care of the cars and all the bills. In fact, Susan had never put gas in the car or paid one bill in all those years. Mike always bought her flowers on Mother's Day and Susan always made fresh apple pie on Father's Day.

#### COUPLE 18

Ryan and Monica have been married seven years and have three children. Jamie is five, Kevin is three, and Amy is one and a half-years-old. Monica is an accountant and Ryan is an advertising agent. At the end of a long day there is no therapy like kids to take your mind off your work. Ryan and Monica decided before they got married that they would both work. They always knew they wanted children but they were not quite prepared for the changes three little ones brought into their lives. Monica had to reserve all of her sick leave to use when Amy was born in case her short maternity leave was not enough. This meant that Ryan was usually the one to stay home when Jamie or Kevin got sick. However, he really did not mind—he enjoyed his kids and spent lots of time with them. Ryan spent most evenings giving baths to the children and straightening the house. Every other night was his night to fix dinner and he often included Jamie in the planning and preparation to give Monica more time with the two little ones. Monica often joked about how good he was at doing the laundry or changing the baby's diaper. "I sure married a wonderful wife," she teased.

Discussion:

How do you think these two couples would rank on the Jacobson Marital Roles Scale?

(Couple 0 would be extremely traditional and Couple 18 would be extremely equalitarian.)

Do you think these couples could have happy marriages?

(Yes, because both partners are either traditional or equalitarian and both feel comfortable in their roles.)

Do you see any advantages or disadvantages in these two marriages?

(The main advantage of a traditional couple is that both people know what to expect of each other. There is not the constant discussion over who will do what. The main disadvantage is that they miss out on learning new skills and having new experiences.

The main advantage of an equalitarian couple is that both have more freedom to try different activities and acquire new skills. The main disadvantage is that there are very few equalitarian couples that are happy until they have gone through a great deal of discussion and unhappiness in trying to define their roles and then make them work.)

Susan could be in real trouble if Mike dies before she does. She will need to know how to fill her car with gas and how to take care of financial affairs. What problems would arise if Susan died? Monica and Ryan would be better able to manage the home if something were to happen to either of them.

It is interesting to note that Jacobson wrote his article in 1952. It seems we view the problems of unequal role division as a contemporary problem. In reality this problem has endured for many decades and will probably follow us for many more. Learning to deal with it on an individual basis in separate marriages may be the key to solving it. Old habits die hard. A spouse should remember that even the most contemporary mate will have some trouble being contemporary if he/she was raised in a home where roles were not divided equally.

#### IS THE DIVISION OF ROLES MORE EQUAL TODAY?

At the University of California, Berkeley, a study found that the women in the senior class had clear-cut expectations for the future. Over 80% thought a career was “very important; 97% either hoped or planned to marry or be in a committed partnership. Most expected to interrupt their careers for a few years to have children, but did not think this would be a disadvantage at work. What they did not seem to have thought out—or discussed with boyfriends—was how they and their future husbands would divide the work at home.

What men think on this subject is suggested by another Berkeley study. Only 13% of the male seniors expected to be the one who would miss an important meeting at work for a sick child. Only 38% expected to share laundry work equally, while 31% expected to share cooking. (In both cases, about twice as many women seniors expected the man they married to share responsibilities.)

A Berkeley sociologist, Arlie Hochschild, did a study of 50 couples in their late twenties and early thirties. She calculated that although husbands did, on an average, one-third of all household chores, working wives did two-thirds of all the daily jobs—cooking, cleaning, and other chores that fix the doer into a rigid routine. Men, by contrast, have more control over when they make their contributions. For example, most women cook dinner and most men change the oil in the family car. However, dinner needs to be prepared every evening, while the car oil needs to be changed every six months. Women usually make breakfast and men mow the lawn.

Women more often do two tasks at once—write checks and return phone calls; vacuum and keep an eye on a two-year-old; fold laundry and plan the shopping list. Men more often cook dinner or take the

children to the park. Women juggle three spheres—job, children, and housework, while men juggle two—job and children.

Women devote proportionately more of their time at home to housework, men to child care. Since most parents prefer tending children to cleaning house, men do more of what they would rather do. Men also do fewer of the undesirable household chores like washing toilets and scrubbing floors. More men than women take their children on fun outings to the park, the zoo, and other special events. Women spend more time on maintenance (feeding and bathing children). These are enjoyable activities to be sure, but less special.

[Arlie Hochschild, "The New Marriage Reality," Glamour, July, 1989, pp. 142-145 and 208]

#### DISCUSS:

Do you think roles and responsibilities are divided equally in today's marriages?  
(In some, yes. In most, no.)

Do you think a wife should be able to work if she wants to?  
(Yes, but this is something that should be discussed before marriage. The couple might also discuss having children and who cares for the children. Whose responsibility is it to take care of the children in a family?)

This is an issue that each couple must discuss and decide. We do know that children who are raised with both parents interacting with and caring for the children have an advantage over those who do not.

What might happen in a marriage between an extremely equalitarian female and an extremely traditional male?

(Such a couple is likely to have some very difficult problems, unless they are extremely good at compromising.)

What happens to family roles when a traditional wife begins to work full-time?

(Roles must be adjusted. A wife cannot continue to do all household chores, car pools, cleaning, cooking, and go to work full-time. Some jobs may become the husband's or be delegated to the children.)

What might happen in a marriage where the opposite is true?

(This couple may still have problems but they are not likely to be as severe. She will probably enjoy his willingness to help around the house and with the kids but she may not be as agreeable when he suggests that she returns to work.)

What marital roles do you see in the marriages of your family and friends?

(extremely equalitarian, equalitarian, traditional, or extremely traditional)

Do you think they see their marriage in the same way you do or do they sometimes have a distorted view?

(Sometimes when you are too close to the situation it is hard to evaluate it accurately. Some wives may feel confused. Is her marriage unequal or is she just feeling sorry for herself? A husband might wonder if his wife is a nag or if he is just lazy around the house.)

What is the style you grew up with?

What activities and chores does your mother do? List

Which activities and chores does your father do? List

Is this the way you want to have your marriage run? If so why, or if not why not?

Review the history of Gender Roles in America. A concise article is from Yale Teacher's Institute is found here

<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1982/6/82.06.09.x.html>

Make a chart on board with 3 columns, Men, Women, Children  
List responsibilities of each in different timeframes or dates.

1700-1800

1860-1900

1900-1920

Depression 1930's

WWII 1940's

1950's

Feminist Movement 1960's

Equal Rights 1986

Now Today

Show results of UC Berkeley Study.

So it shows that men still expect women to do more housework, but also are happy if the women work outside the home.

Read "The Good Wife's Guide" taken from 1950's magazine. Ask students how they feel about the advice.

Read "A day in the Life" Discuss and compare the two lifestyles.

Throughout the 1990's and 2000's women have actively successfully joined the labor force. However a newer study in 2006 indicates that in many cases they are happier when returning to a somewhat more traditional form of marriage.

See and discuss articles and video clips from the following website.

<http://www.happiestwives.org/tierney.htm>

This study indicates that women want more emotional connection with their husbands, and want them to bring in at least 2/3's of the family income and housework divided fairly, not necessarily equally.

Many young couples start out very egalitarian for the first few years of marriage, but after the babies come, the trend seems to go back to more traditional Roles.

Over the years men have started to do more childcare and housework, but still not near the amount that women do.

Have student read the when two careers plus children equals stress handout.

Watch one of these video clips or listen to or read words to “Put Another Log on the Fire” by Shel Silverstein.

<http://deemusic.homestead.com/baconbeans.html> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqPCcV7lHzc>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7s37SgoAU4&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YS9DhwT2E8&feature=related>

Discuss which type of marriage the writer represented, and results. This represents an extreme view of the traditional marriage.

It appears that many traditional chores related to family and home get traditionally delegated to the female, and can be a source of much frustration and depression. According to current studies, men need to be more helpful.

The following links have some excellent articles about how this can occur.

[http://www.babycenter.com/0\\_big-story-ending-the-chore-wars-how-to-get-your-mate-to-help\\_1425647.bc?print=true](http://www.babycenter.com/0_big-story-ending-the-chore-wars-how-to-get-your-mate-to-help_1425647.bc?print=true)

<http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-2421/T-2233web.pdf>

<http://marriage.about.com/od/questionsanswers/a/dividechores.htm>

Copy some of these articles, and have students read and summarize results, teacher may made a questionnaire worksheet about these finding.

Some movies have illustrated attempts of males to incorporate more help around the house.

Possibly use a video clip from “Mr. Mom” or “Daddy Daycare”.

“Boy Meets Girl” by Peter Stone and Carl Reiner, “The Art of Loving Well” pg.84.

The discussion of Gender roles has been a hot topic for many years in society as well as religion and is an important one for you and your spouse to work through before you get married.