Equality for All Women… Except for Working Mothers?

Earlier this week researchers from Essex University made what might be considered a rather obvious announcement: working mothers are stressed.

I can almost hear mothers around the world yelling, “This is news?! We could have told you that without an academic study.”

As the research reveals, working women with one child are 18 percent more stressed than other people. Add another child into the equation and stress levels rise to 40 percent more.

Unfortunately, flexible working hours and the wonders of working from home in the digital age don’t lessen the pressure. The only thing that reduces the stress is fewer working hours.

Such a study coincides with a Pew Research survey from several years ago, which found that in comparison to fulltime working mothers, stay-at-home moms or part-time working moms are less rushed and feel like they spend the right amount of time with their children.

The problem is simple: working mothers are heavily stressed because they have a two-for-the-price-of-one work arrangement. On the one hand, they are trying to maintain the biological responsibilities of childbearing and caregiving – a job toward which many women have a natural tendency and enjoyment. On the other hand, they are operating under societal pressure to get out into the real world, earn money, and “make a difference” with their lives.

Although it doesn’t take a genius to figure out this problem, it seems that many simply can’t bring themselves to say it. Such an idea doesn’t promote the equality that is supposed to

exist between men and women.

But is it this commitment to equality that is placing undue amounts of stress and subsequent unhappiness on women? Former University of Chicago professor Richard Weaver suggested such was the case in his book, *Ideas Have Consequences*:

> *If we say that woman is identical with man except in that small matter of division of labor in the procreation of the species, which the most rabid egalitarian is driven to accept, there is no reason why she should not do man's work (and by extension, there is no reason why she should not be bombed along with him). So hordes of women have gone into industry and business, where the vast majority of them labor without heart and without incentive. Conscious of their displacement, they see no ideal in the task. And, in fact, they are not treated as equals; they have been made the victims of a transparent deception. Taken from a natural sphere in which they are superior, they are set to wandering between two worlds.*

Arguing that "a social seduction of the female sex has occurred on a vast scale," Weaver encourages a re-evaluation of the state we find ourselves in:

> *If our society were minded to move resolutely toward an ideal, its women would find little appeal, I am sure, in lives of machine-tending and money-handling. And this is so just because woman will regain her superiority when again she finds privacy in the home and becomes, as it were, a priestess radiating the power of proper sentiment. Her life at its best is a ceremony. When William Butler Yeats in "A Prayer for My Daughter" says, "Let her think opinions are accursed," he indicts the modern displaced female, the nervous, hysterical, frustrated, unhappy female, who has lost all queenliness and obtained nothing."*

Is Weaver right? Does equality for women put undue strain on working mothers, giving them a type of bondage instead of the freedom that equality is supposed to offer?

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