

## DISAPPEARING STEREOTYPES

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[Assignment: We have examined several essays regarding gender. In response to these readings, write an essay in which you define some aspect of the male or female role. Choose the rhetorical mode(s) best suited to your thesis.]

(1) One of the most remarkable features of our times is the change in sex roles. In the past, men were the heads of the household whereas females remained subservient to the males. Now the situation has changed. Women are playing a more important and visible role in society and this can be seen through their increasing status in the family.

(2) Whether it be Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Sunday dinner, my grandmother always serves my grandfather his food. First, my grandmother comes into their living room to ask what my grandfather would like on his plate. Without moving an inch or taking his eyes off the television, he mumbles out his order. My grandmother then races into the kitchen and heaps generous amounts of food on my grandfather's plate. She struggles over to the coffee pot (she has a bad leg), and pours the old man some black coffee. After making sure that she hasn't forgotten anything, she hobbles back into the living room to present this mountain of food to my grandfather. My grandfather expresses his gratitude to her with a brief nod.

(3) Besides acting as a table servant, my grandmother has many other duties. She does all the lawn work and also tends her flower and vegetable gardens. During the winter, she shovels the snow when my grandfather has chest pains, which, though real, often occur at the mention of "work." My grandmother is also the housekeeper. Since my grandfather is at his club for most of the day, it is up to my grandmother, with the help of a ten-year-old Schnauzer named Gigi, to clean the large, two-story house. When I ask my grandmother why she does all the work, whereas my grandfather does virtually none, she explains to me that that was how things were done when she was younger and it is all she can do to repay my grandfather for his love. By conforming to the ideal, servant-like wife of yesteryear, my grandmother is an embodiment of the stereotypical traditional woman.

(4) My mother, on the other hand, will not conform to this traditional stereotype. She is tough, straightforward, and loving. For example, if my dad were to order my mom to bring him his food, holiday or not, my mother would get angry and probably tell my father to fix his own plate. She refuses to be humble to anyone. Behind this somewhat tough exterior, there lies a loving interior. Many times when either my sister or I were sick, she would cancel her plans that day in order to take care of us.

(5) Although my mother stayed home when we were children, she did so out of her own will and not because tradition demanded it. My parents made the decision that it would be best if one of them would be home with the children. They did not like the idea of placing my sister and me at a daycare center. So my mother, formerly a head nurse, gave up her career

to watch over me and Meredith. Mother was probably the more competent of my two parents as far as taking care of children because she possesses greater patience than my father. Along with caring for the children, my mother also has many other duties. She meticulously cleans the house once a week, while also preparing a great majority of our meals since nobody else in the family is gifted in the fine culinary arts. When it comes to the yard, the whole family works, with my mother leading the operation.

( 6 ) Remarkably, my mother does most of the work associated with the traditional wife; however, the line is drawn here. My mother's voice in family affairs is just as loud, if not louder than my father's. For example, if my mother told my father to fix dinner, wash the dishes, serve us dessert, he would. If she told me to climb up on the roof of the house to search for a needle, I would give her a weird look and then proceed to the garage to get the ladder. Because of her authority, she does many jobs left to men, such as calling repairmen, repairing appliances and organizing the taxes and bills. In short, my mother commands authority that usually is not associated with a woman as much as it is with a man.

( 7 ) Though women have made tremendous strides in the past to achieve a more important status in and out of the home, the race does not stop here. Women are playing a more and more important role in society. If we just look around, we find mothers working outside the home. Not only are mothers working, but they are receiving better jobs. We also find that women are becoming an equal to males in governing the family. Like my mother, women have come to be more independent in their thinking. They no longer rely on males to make their decisions for them as did my grandmother. In short, women are knocking down the stereotypes, which fall like dominoes, in their efforts to challenge the old barriers.