# The Men Work Sundays 10/10/2016

If it were Sunday, and you were in the Jesionowski household, you could bet your bottom dollar that at some point, you would hear “Why doesn’t Kelly have to work too?” I know this, because that is something I uttered over and over again when my Dad made my brother and me do hot, tedious work while my sister got to sit in her room. I simply could not understand why she didn’t have to do the same chores that we had to do. Every time I complained, my question was dodged, and turned around to question my own work ethic. I can’t say I had the best work ethic, but it sure would have helped if I did not feel like I was getting the short end of the stick every time the lord’s day came around. My parents always made my brother and me do outdoor work every Sunday because we were boys, and my sister did not have to because she was a girl, which reinforces the cultural norm of men doing the laborious outdoor work.

Whether we were mowing the lawn, trimming the trees, or weed-whacking fields of dead plants, my sister was nowhere to be found. The only things she ever had to do was dishes and laundry. Thinking back now, the chores my brother and I did were tasks for men. If I try to picture my Sister out in our yard with a chainsaw cutting up wood it simply does not seem right. Instead if I picture her folding some laundry it seems perfectly normal. I wonder if she had done the chores with us, if I would still think it seemed off when picturing that scenario. Is my bias caused by how my parents distributed the work to us, or by me knowing what work, in general, is known to be done by males or females? I could never answer this myself with confidence that I was right because of the fact that I grew up in only one scenario. I have no idea what I would think or feel if every Sunday my sister was out there with us. Would I think it was weird that she was out there working with us, even though at the time I thought it unfair that she was not?

Never did my parents say, when I questioned them about my sister not working, “Because she is a girl”. That saying in itself seems wrong. I’m sure if she wanted to be out there, and she complained about doing laundry instead of going outside in the hot sun to maintain our property, there would be no problem with her doing that. Her choice not to, reinforces the gender role that it is the men that should out working with the power tools and keeping the property maintained. Women in the past centuries have been stepping up and fighting for this view to be abolished but the movement is still in progress. Even when slavery was starting to be questioned, there were slaves who did not want to fight, or even think they deserved, to be able to be free. It was so ingrained in their heads that they could only be slaves that they did not even strive for anything more. However, as culture changed and they had a chance, of course, they took it. I wonder if, as the movement for women working jobs, that are culturally known to be for men, moves forward, more women will aspire to fill these jobs in, or if the genetics of being a male or female, keeps the majority of each gender in the fields they are in now.

Where does this cultural norm come from though? I believe it can be taken back to when there were hunters and gatherers. Women stuck to gathering close to where they had camp while the men went out to hunt, and put themselves in danger. Is this a deep cultural tradition that has never stopped being normal, or is this the way it is supposed to be? My family reinforced in my mind that women do not do hard work, without ever saying it directly. That was just how it was, and even though I respect the woman that pushes past the cultural norm, and strives to be in an industry filled with men, picturing women doing something like weed-whacking seems off to me. It’s possible that in my lifetime, that will change and no job could be classified as a manly or womanly job.

My sister, even though raised folding laundry and doing dishes instead of tasks that could be considered manly, has excelled in a field dominated by men. Her major is electrical engineering, which in 2007 had only 12.4 percent women in the graduating class of this field. Because of my experience, hearing about all her job offers and her making over six figures a year, I do not understand the complaint that women are discriminated against, in terms of obtaining a job. In fact my oldest brother is in the same field, had a harder time finding a job, and makes less than her. It seemed like, just like how minorities are sought after to diversify a workplace, companies wanted to hire her even more because she was a girl. They were even willing to pay more because she was a girl, which completely goes against the protests I hear about.

The work my brother and I did was always very physical. After two hours of holding a weed-whacker, that wouldn't stop vibrating violently, our hands would go numb. We shared the pain together, and it gave us a bond that is still alive today. As my older brother, he would always be the first to step into a new realm of work. I remember seeing him using a chainsaw and being so jealous. However even with our three year age gap, once he picked something up, it usually wasn't a full year before I was given permission to do the same. This obviously irked my brother to no end, but I'm sure he still enjoyed always being before me and having me watch with envy. I never stood behind my sister, eyes wide, watching her do laundry, because I just was not enticed by it. I’d assume she felt the same way towards the work that we did. I realized over time that I actually preferred the work I did. I would have hated to be stuck inside folding clothes and dusting off our old wooden furniture with lemon-scented spray.

As I grew older, and went to places without my parents, I found myself needing more and more money. They would not simply give me money, aside from my allowance, and slowly my piggy bank became lighter and lighter. I talked to my Dad and was able to do work on top of my chores, and get ten dollars an hour doing whatever he needed done. I came to appreciate the work, and realized I was saving him (and his back) from doing this work. My friends were getting gym memberships and I thought of all the hard work outside as a workout. The best part is, I was getting paid to work out, and whittling down my Father’s long list of things that needed to be done. I worked harder, complained less, and became more of a man.

The effect this way of parenting had on me was not only giving me a sense of accomplishment when doing hard work, but giving me the idea that it is standard for women to do less physical work and more indoor chores. However, I have no problem thinking of a woman in a position like a CEO, maybe because my mom owns two stores here on campus. The thing is that men are genetically inclined to be stronger and able to do these physical tasks so maybe the majority of workers in labor demanding jobs, like landscaping, will never be equal in gender distribution. It is quite obvious that my views are directly shaped from how I was raised, and my past, but I would still consider myself open-minded and willing for my views to be swayed another way.

Overall I do not think my parents were in any way wrong, or harsh to raise us this way. When they grew up it was even more socially expected that women partake in “womanly” jobs, and men do the more “manly” jobs. It was also never forced on my sister that she do laundry, and not work outside, so if she did have a passion for that I am sure it would have been supported. When I have a daughter I will most likely offer her the choice of how she wants to help out. As generations go on I believe this gender role will fade away more as it has been for the past centuries.. Women are already succeeding in getting high power positions in companies, and even being sought after. Personally I learned to love how hard work made me feel. I felt like a man, and realized that I am helping out myself, my father, and improving the state of our property.

Works Cited

Guizzo, Erico. "The EE Gender Gap Is Widening." \*IEEE Spectrum: Technology, Engineering, and Science News\*. N.p., 01 Dec. 2008. Web. 20 Sept. 2016.