Book Review: The Second Shift
by Arlie Russell Hochschild

Summary

In The Second Shift, Arlie Russell Hochschild sets up her argument around in-depth case studies of nine families who exhibit different strategies for dealing with "the extra month a year (4)." Hochschild claims that American families are experiencing a "stalled revolution," in which most married couples work two jobs, but society remains unchanged and the responsibility for "the second shift" still falls primarily on the shoulders of women. Hochschild chose to examine this topic so she could explore how men and women view this delegation of responsibility, and discover what sort influence it has on love and marriage during a time of high divorce rates. After conducting extensive interviews and observations of eight couples covered in the book, Hochschild was able to come to the conclusion that problems at home seem to arise from clashes in deep gender ideology and how each partner reconciles his or her respective ideologies with his or her behavior.

There were many ways in which the women described in The Second Shift tried to deal with the extra month a year. Nancy Holt, the first woman described in the book, tried to bring her egalitarian gender ideology to fruition at home by directly asking her husband to share the second shift. Evan Holt, however, though he maintained an egalitarian *surface* gender ideology, his deep traditional views caused him to be resistant in his behavioral strategy. Because Nancy needed to feel that her marriage was egalitarian in order to be happy, she cut back at work, displaced their problems onto their son, and created the "upstairs-downstairs" myth as a solution to their dispute. According to Hochschild, Evan won and Nancy continued to do the second shift, telling herself, "Why wreck a marriage over a dirty frying pan (45)?"

Adrienne Sherman also held a "sharing showdown" with her husband, but unlike Nancy Holt, she actually won. Most women in Hochschild's study, however, did not approach the issue of the second shift in such a direct manner. Some, like Carmen Delacorte, dealt with the situation indirectly, by "playing helpless." Others, like Nina Tanagawa, solved the problem by becoming a "supermom," and dealing with all the demands of home and work without asking their husbands to share. Still others, like Carol Alston, cut back at work – a method that felt like a triumph for some, and a defeat for others. All women, however, seemed to find it necessary to cut back on something in order to deal with the second shift – whether that be housework (most typical for traditional working class mothers), their marriage, or childcare. All women sought the help of housekeepers, babysitters, or female relatives, but despite this help and other cuts, most still found it necessary to cut back on personal needs as well.

When Hochschild addresses men's strategies for dealing with the second shift, she makes a powerful point: "…for most men, the situation [differs from women] in one fundamental way. By tradition, the second shift [does] not fall to them (208)." Thus, men approach the second shift in a different way than women. Hochschild explains that men commonly feel judged by their capacity to support their families and earn status at work, and are therefore more often the recipients of pressure to share at home than the givers. Furthermore, although pressure to share is common (eighty percent are pushed to help out), Hochschild found that said pressure can evoke feelings of fear in men – fear that they will lose control of their wives, fear that they will lose status as a man by sharing, and fear that their wives will boss them around or get out of the job themselves. Beyond these fears, Hochschild also explains that some men (like Peter Tanagawa) refuse to share because it can be a way to compensate for their wives' success at work.

In light of these reasons that motivate men to resist sharing the second shift, it is unsurprising that Hochschild found that only twenty percent of men actually want to share and *do* share. The other eighty percent resist sharing by disaffiliating themselves from domestic tasks, reducing their needs in terms of domestic niceties, offering substitutes (like emotional support) for sharing, or by being selective in the encouragement they give their wives (claiming their wife does a better job with the second shift than they do).

No matter the method for resisting, however, Hochschild asserts that men's refusal to share the second shift has negative consequences. Although working women have been given a portion of the blame for America's high divorce rate in the past, the working wife served as a control (rather than in independent variable) in Hochschild's study. Since every woman in her study worked, Hochschild was able to conclude that marital happiness showed a positive correlation with the husband's willingness to share the second shift. In fact, Hochschild found that in every one of the couples in her study that seriously considered divorce, the men avoided the work at home. Since it became apparent in her study that the job of homemaker has been devalued by both men and women, Hochschild was able to conclude that one solution for the problem of the "stalled revolution" is simply for husbands and wives to share.

Critical Evaluation

In chapter six, "A Notion of Manhood and Giving Thanks: Peter and Nina Tanagawa," Hochschild introduces a family in which the second shift is so clearly defined as the wife's responsibility that the husband feels that it is completely satisfactory to substitute emotional support for actual involvement. According to Hochschild, this arrangement had suited Peter and Nina at the beginning of their relationship because they had both maintained somewhat

traditional gender ideologies. Nina had planned to base her identity at home, and likewise, Peter had planned to base his identity at work. However, Nina's success in the workplace and Peter's dissatisfaction with his own job complicated their intended arrangement and created a clash between reality and their gender ideologies. As Nina's demands (and salary) at work grew, Peter grew uncomfortable with her success and, as a result, resisted sharing the second shift. Hochschild explains, "if [Peter] *both* earned less than [Nina] did *and also* shared the second shift…[t]hat would amount to two assaults on his manhood and present him with a line [of responsibility at home] he felt he couldn't cross (89-90)."

Nina sensed Peter's feelings about her professional success, and, for the sake of their marriage, prevented the "two assaults on his manhood" by continuing to work the second shift. When Nina became sick from her extreme stress and exhaustion, however, Peter did not recognize her illness as a sign that he needed to share, but rather saw the situation as product of "Nina's problem" – that problem being the conflict between her responsibilities at home and at work (86). Hochschild asserts that, essentially, it seems as though Peter forced Nina into the role of "supermom" so that he could feel good about himself as a man. His role at home was large enough to allow him to care for the emotional needs of his wife and children, but small enough to safely declare home as Nina's realm. Peter was "a hundred percent behind" Nina, but the extra month a year remained hers to deal with.

I think Hochschild presents a convincing argument in the case of Peter and Nina Tanagawa. Nina seems to care deeply about her marriage and Peter's self-esteem, and so it makes sense that she would try to "make up" for her success in other ways. As Hochschild indicates, however, it is not exactly fair to Nina that Peter "allows" her to do this. Just because Peter's traditional values define his manhood based on success at work and leisure at home, does

not mean that Nina should be expected to work full time *and* do eighty percent of the second shift. I think Hochschild's argument is plausible in this chapter because the problems facing Peter and Nina are grounded in the reality of their respective jobs.

However, Hochschild does seem to remove intentions from her argument completely. Peter seems like he is a loving husband and father, and I cannot imagine that he was fully aware of how he treated Nina or the kind of responsibility he forced her to take on. It is likely that he would have been horrified by the idea that Nina would refrain from telling a journalist her salary for fear of embarrassing him or making him feel bad. In many ways, I think that Peter wanted to whole-heartedly support his wife and her career, but I think he was to preoccupied with working through his own feelings of inadequacy as a male, as well as feelings of concern for their daughters (who, in his opinion, were missing their mother). However, though I think intentions should be taken into consideration, Peter's intentions did not change the fact that Nina was forced to take on eighty percent of the second shift.

The conflict of interest Peter and Nina Tanagawa faced seems to recall the theories introduced in Nijole Benokraitis' article, "How Family Wars Affect Us: Four Models of Family Change and Their Consequences." Peter's beliefs seem to fall in line with the Conservative perspective on changing families in that he does not view the changes that have occurred in his family as positive. Nina's professional success, however, is the product of the societal changes detailed in Benokraitis' Liberal perspective. Thus, the societal remedies prescribed by the Liberal perspective would help eliminate the "time poverty" Nina experienced because of her job and "supermom" strategy. Thus, I think Hochschild is correct in leaving the Tanagawa's situation "unfinished." As long as society remains the same and Peter continues to both devalue Nina's job and refuse to share, Nina will have to continue to work the extra month a year.

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