



**Raffles Institution**  
**2015 Year 6 Preliminary Examination**  
**General Certificate of Education Advanced Level**  
**Higher 1**

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## **GENERAL PAPER**

**8807/02**

Paper 2

**31 August 2015**

INSERT

**1 hour 30 minutes**

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### **READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

This Insert contains the passage for Paper 2.

*Judith Shulevitz writes that child-minding duties are not equal between mothers and fathers.*

- 1 There's a story my daughter loves to hear me tell: the day after I came home from the hospital with her big brother, my first child, I was seized by the certainty that I was about to die. I sobbed uncontrollably. I asked my husband, "But who will keep him in socks? Who'll make sure he's wearing his little socks?"
- 2 New parenthood, of course, does things to your brain. But I was on to something, even in my deranged, postpartum way. I should state for the record that my husband is perfectly handy with socks. Still, the parent more obsessed with the children's hosiery is the one who'll make sure it's in stock. And the shouldering of that one task can snowball into responsibility for the whole assembly line of child-minding. She who buys the bootees will surely buy the bottle washer, just as she'll probably find the babysitter and pencil in the class trips. I don't mean to say that she'll be the one to do everything, just that she'll make sure that almost everything gets done. Sociologists sometimes call the management of familial duties "worry work", and the person who does it the "designated worrier", because you need large reserves of emotional energy to stay on top of it all. 5 10
- 3 I wish I could say that fathers and mothers worry in equal measure. But they don't. Disregard what your two-career couple friends say about going 50-50. Sociological studies of couples from all strata of society confirm that, by and large, mothers draft the to-do lists while fathers pick and choose among the items. And whether a woman loves or hates worry work, it can scatter her focus on what she does for pay or clean off a career path. This grind of apprehension and organisation may be one of the least movable obstacles to women's equality in the workplace. 15
- 4 It's surprising that household supervision resists gender reassignment to the degree that it does. In the United States today, more than half of all women work, and women are 40 percent of the sole or primary breadwinners in households with children under 18. The apportionment of the acts required to keep home and family together has also been evening out during the past 40 years (though, for housework, this is more because women have sloughed it off rather than because men have taken it on). Nonetheless, "one of the last things to go is women keeping track of the kind of non-routine details of taking care of children: when they have to go to the doctor, when they need a permission slip for school – paying attention at that level," says the social psychologist Francine Deutsch, author of *Halving It All: How Equally Shared Parenting Works*. 20 25
- 5 The amount of attention that must be paid to such details has also ballooned in the past few decades. This is because of our commitment to what the sociologist Annette Lareau calls "concerted cultivation". We enrol children in dance classes, soccer, tutoring — often three or four extracurricular activities a week. These demand reluctant effort, obviously, but also have less visible time costs: searching the web for the best programme, ordering equipment, packing snacks and so on. We fret that we're overscheduling the children, but don't seem to realise that we're also overscheduling ourselves. And when I say 'we', you know who I mean. A 2008 study by Dr. Lareau and the sociologist Elliot B. Weininger found that while fathers often, say, coach games, it's mothers who perform the behind-the-scenes labour that makes kids' sports and other pursuits possible. 30 35
- 6 Of course, sweeping generalisations about who does what always have a near-infinite number of exceptions. There are many more men in charge of child care than there were 20-odd years ago. How many more depends on whether you ask men or women: half of the men surveyed in a Families and Work Institute study from 2008 said they were either the responsible parent or shared the role equally with their spouse, while two-thirds of the women said they were the one in charge. 40
- 7 And then there are the stay-at-home dads: two million of them in 2012, up from 1.1 million in 1989, although only around a fifth of those fathers stay home for the children. The other four-fifths are unemployed, ill, in school or retired. Some of these fathers serve as primary caregivers. On average, however, men who are out of work eke out slightly under three hours a day of housework and child care combined — less than working women do (3.4 hours a day). 45

- 8 One reason women like me get stuck with the micromanagement is that we don't see it coming, not at first. Pamela Smock, a sociologist at the University of Michigan, tells a story about the students in her "Women and Work" class. Mostly women, they spend a semester reading about the gendered division of domestic labour. And yet in their presentations, even they slip up and talk about men "helping out". "As long as the phrase 'he helped' is used," says Dr. Smock, "we know we have not attained gender equality." 50
- 9 No matter how generous, "helping out" isn't sharing. I feel pinpricks of rage every time my husband fishes for praise for something I've asked him to do. On the other hand, my friends and I have never gotten around to drawing up the List of Lists and insisting that we split it. Even though women tell researchers that having to answer for the completion of domestic tasks stresses them out more than any other aspect of family life, I suspect they're not always willing to cede control. 55
- 10 I've definitely been guilty of "maternal gatekeeping" — rolling my eyes or making sardonic asides when my husband has been in charge but hasn't pushed hard enough to get teeth brushed or bar mitzvah practice done. This drives my husband insane, because he's a really good father and he knows that I know it. But women can't help themselves. They have standards, helicopter-ish though they may be. 60
- 11 Allow me to advance one more, perhaps controversial, theory about why women are on the hook for what you might call the human-resources side of child care: women simply worry more about their children. This is largely a social fact. Mothers live in a world of other mothers, not to mention teachers and principals, who judge us by our children. Or maybe we just think they're judging us. 65
- 12 But there is also a biological explanation: we have been conditioned to worry. Evidence from other animals as well as humans makes the case that the female of the species is programmed to do more than the male to help their offspring thrive. Neurological and endocrinological changes, the production of hormones such as oxytocin and estrogen during pregnancy and after birth, exert a profound influence over mothers' moods and regulate the depth of their attachment to their children. 70
- 13 So we worry. When we worry, we coordinate. When we coordinate, we multitask. We text about a play date while tending to a spreadsheet. And we underestimate how many minutes we rack up on stuff we're not being paid to do. Smartphones are particularly dangerous in this regard, because they make multitasking seem like no work at all.
- 14 But what is to be done? When Martin Luther King, Jr. had the Dream in inspiring the civil rights movement, we enacted laws that broke the attitudes on segregation, painful as they were in the beginning. We created avenues that allowed blacks and whites to come together in meaningful ways, awkward as it was for both groups. Most of all, King created a vision never seen before. I want that — for mothers! 75
- 15 All this may change as men as well as women chafe against the lengthening and increasingly unpredictable workday foisted upon us by globalisation and the Internet, among other forces. It should be said, however, that planning for equality is not the same as achieving it. The realities of child rearing — the shortage of time and sleep, the fraying of tempers, the pressure on women to be the right kind of mother and on men not to let family affect career — tend to define equality down. It's about time things get easier when Mom and Dad feel happier looking after junior. Just ask the Finnish mothers. 80  
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*Adapted from the New York Times Sunday Review*

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