

Can a Solution to Gender Diversity be Found in DNA?

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Abstract

Considering the position and role of women in some cultures around the world during different times in history reveal that women were not always perceived as self-sufficient individuals and did not have equal rights.

Motherhood and career are two roles in a woman's life that compete most with each other for attention and time. This article purposes to discuss whether the inadvertent historical and psychological trauma to the concept of self and its following compensatory behavioral mechanisms could be the cause of such a competition.

This article will also briefly discuss whether reconciling the two roles in a balanced way promotes health and well-being for a woman.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to discover whether the two roles (career and children) that compete most with each other for attention and time in a woman's life may have a psychological aspect to it. This article will also briefly discuss whether reconciling the two roles in a balanced way promotes health and wellbeing for a woman.

Considering the position and role of women in some cultures around the world and different times in history reveal that women were not perceived as self-sufficient individuals and did not have equal rights whereby admission to most professions and occupations were closed to them [1-6].

Content

The first wave of feminism of the mid-nineteenth century that coalesced the efforts for women's equal rights into a clearly identifiable movement was the beginning of an attempt to advocate the dignity, intelligence and basic human potential of women [7]. Women are nowadays more prevalent in the work force in different sectors with even a slight relative overrepresentation in the highest paid occupational group of managers, professionals and technicians in developed countries, where women assume tasks not corresponding to their traditional pattern [8,9].

They can be focused, committed, resilient and successful. Women bring different perspectives and approaches to business, resulting in a more inclusive workplace and often better performance for the company [10].

While obvious oppression and injustice have been removed over the past centuries and much has been accomplished on a social, political, economical and legal level, the attitude remains in many areas for women to prove themselves equal to their masculine peers [11].

In the comparative absence of inequality on an external level and an ongoing behavioural pattern to prove one's self-worth this article raises the question whether there may be an internal and psychological reason, as a consequence of the historical oppression that is the cause for the behaviour.

1. An individual's self-identity is learnt and formed through the dialogue between (external) the societal/environmental/cultural background and the (internal) individual response.

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2. Self-concept is the overall idea we have about who we are and includes cognitive and affective judgements about ourselves. It is multi-dimensional, incorporating our views of ourselves in terms of several different aspects (e.g. social, religious, spiritual, physical and emotional). It is learnt, regulated and formed as a person matures and constantly influenced by biological and environmental factors and social interaction. Self-concept is related to several other "self" constructs, such as self-esteem, self-image, self-efficacy, and self-perception. Gender identity determines to a great extent one's system of values, motives and patterns of human behaviour and formation of a special system of ideas about oneself as a person. In brief, self-concept is a dialogue between the internal conversations of self and external conversations of other and self-esteem, self-worth and self-efficacy are outcomes of this dialogue.

The obvious consequence of a dialogue in a society that used to define a woman's role as insufficient and unequal on social, economic and legal levels on the simple grounds of gender is low self-worth and therefore a direct psychological traumatic consequence of oppression [12,13]. Excluding women from equal education /profession and denying them the right express themselves by self-realization adds insult to injury [14].

Research on intergenerational trauma in African-Americans reveals that the historical legacy of enslavement and oppression does indeed create individual, cultural and collective psychological trauma that can well be passed on from generation to generation through multiple mechanisms. [15] The concept of intergenerational trauma in trauma biology introduces behavioural and clinical problems in offspring of trauma survivors and suggests the possible that trauma is transferred over generations. Similar types of symptoms were later described in the children of Vietnam veterans, a phenomenon that was termed "secondary traumatization". This concept did not imply an intergenerational transmission, but rather referred to the stressful

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nature of living with a traumatized individual who may be showing symptoms and recounting or reliving horrific experiences [16,17].

If the behavioural pattern that seeks “proof of self-worth” is the result of a trauma transferred over generations because of experienced historical oppression, understanding the additional harmful consequences this “secondary trauma” carries should be understood in its historical context [18-20].

The oppression and injustice that inhibited women from being able to express them-selves historically also kept them stuck and paralyzed in the role of mother and wife. While removing the injustice has given women the freedom and admission to most professions and occupations, it is at the cost of leaving these “historically-with-emotion-laden” positions behind.

Quantitative and qualitative studies have shown that women in top corporate positions demonstrate these characteristics: self-confidence, emotional intelligence and an instinct to maximize change for overall benefit. They also display their “feminine side” in employee interactions and attract new customers by establishing a collegial environment through displaying nurture, empathy, loyalty, respect and a team spirit. Women seem to be aware of and maximize the self-concepts of others, are more transformational, using interpersonal skills to motivate followers rather than applying positional power or authority. This style of “interactive leadership,” using relational skills to influence others, encourages participation, sharing of power and information, and heightens followers’ self-esteem. Other researchers note that women lead in a more democratic and participative style than men. These qualities in a woman’s leadership style are the very traits that make for a great mother. The qualities of motherhood, which are often more enhanced once a woman enters motherhood, are woman’s strength [21].

As long as women continue to be influenced by historical traumas and consequent defense mechanisms they stay driven by their weakness and lack to prove their worth by “performing, pleasing and trying to be perfect”. When they claim their strength, their worth is no longer up for discussion [23].

The focus on self-esteem and self-concept have additional important benefits to health. Self-esteem is a central aspect of the subjective experience and quality of life. It is powerfully related to factors that influence the affective quality of people’s daily experience, with those who have high self-esteem reporting more positive affect, less hopelessness and fewer depressive symptoms. In a review Diener [24] concluded that self-esteem is the strongest predictor of life satisfaction in the US, outstripping all demographic and objective outcomes, such as age, income, education, physical health, marital status and other psychological variables.

Conclusion

The challenge and invitation to this generation of women is to engage from the strength of their uniqueness. When men and women of identical purpose have the best kind of equality, it allows them to search for economical, legal and societal solutions that are more than the sum of their parts.

Competing Interests

The author declare that there is no competing interests regarding the publication of this article.

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