

DELIVERING LOVE TO CHILDREN: THE ROLE OF FATHER THROUGH FOOD PREPARATION

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ABSTRACT

The division of task for both parents has been established long time ago whereby mother is nurturer of love for children while father has always being the breadwinner. But this division slowly altered when factors such as social lifestyle, education and technology change gradually with time. The increasing number of working mother cause by those factors has somehow change the role of father. Literature stated children who have good relationships with their fathers will have an increase in mental development and they turn out to be more sociable. When mother deliver and communicate their love through foodways, it is believed that fathers are able deliver the love equivalent using the same platform.

Keywords: *love, father, food, foodways, children*

INTRODUCTION

The role of men and women were established or set up years back. Since the olden days, women have always being associated with house chores and drudgery including food preparation for family. The famous Claude levi-Strauss using its culinary triangle to distinguish the role of man and women whereby man in the olden days act as a hunter. How about a woman? A woman is traditionally brought up to become a wife and mother (Idris, 2003). Traditionally, women are expected to play the roles of a wife for her husband and a mother for her children. Women must fulfill her responsible as a caretaker and do all the household chores. They are also responsible for taking care of the children, which includes bathing, feeding, and consoling. A mother also acts as a moral educator of their children (Austen, 2004). In many part of the globe, the roles of men and women began when a man pronounces the marriage vow towards women. Once the vow has been uttered, men must play his roles as a husband and a father while women act as wife and a mother. It is uncommon for men or fathers to do domestic chores especially preparing food for the family. It has always been the nature of family institution whereby the women acts as server while the men act as the provider or in other words the breadwinner.

What exactly are the responsibility of a man as a husband, a father and the head of the household? The role of a man has been played as the breadwinner and also responsible in shaping the discipline of children. A husband or a father has been charged with matters related to the income of the family. In other words, they act as the provider of housing and foods, and most importantly as the protector of their wife and children (Satterfield, 2001).

The traditional role of men and women has been in existence indirectly in order to dictate the power of the head of the household. As a result, men have been seen as the house leader to the wife and their children (Taylor, n.d.). Of all the chores, the responsibility of preparing food for the family has always been the task of the women in specific mother or wife. As the caregiver in the family, it is customary to think that they are the one who should be preparing meals. Besides, wives are the one who stay at home prepared the food while

the husband work for ensuring there will be food on the tables. In simple words, fathers need to ensure the food is sufficed while mother need to ensure the love is enough.

Yet, much have change in today's modern society and those notions are no longer attached to both genders nowadays because of the evolution of society. Modern society is characterized by high levels of industrialization, urbanization, education, wealth, and gender equality in public life (Yount, 2005). Even though modernization has improved our lives such as overcome poverty and increase health status modernization and economic development that we experience today also gives pressure especially in terms of the increased cost of living to families (Browning, n.d.). As the cost of living has increased greatly compared to the past, this has forces women to join the work force and contribute to the economic growth of nation as well as family direct or indirectly.

Besides economic turbulence, the change in today's education system has given men and also women the equal opportunity to obtain knowledge thus, increasing the number of women with qualifications to enter the labour force (Kemmer, 2000). This then leads to the change of family structure, whereby there is a significant decrease in the 'traditional family' structure comprising two parents with one working and the other one stayed at home taking care of children and doing household chores (Harrington, Van Deusen & Ladge, 2010).

Moreover, there is an increased rejection in the traditional gender roles – man as breadwinners and woman as the person who takes care of the home and family (Scott, 2006). Couples today has also adapt to the fact that women are working and therefore the needs to share responsibility of domestic task increases. Women suffer the dual burden of both demanding professional tasks and also their own domestic responsibilities which creates an immense tense and depression (Scott, 2006). As greater number of women entering the labour force, it is likely that the amount of time allocated to prepare meals for the family reduces (Mancino & Newman, 2007). In most households, women remain as the one who carries out the burden of being the one responsible of household task including preparing

meals. However, women who have husband who are more open towards equal responsibilities were less burdened with household works (Ahmad, 1999).

The preparation of meals was previously the job of the mother. But as time changes, men slowly begin to take over the responsibility as a contribution to the household (Kemmer, 2000). However, men's role as father, nurturer and caregiver is still not entirely applied in our culture. Corpus of literatures mostly stated women are conveyer of love and affection to children though the roles of parents are continuously changing. Therefore, the main question here is whether the affection and love from the father could be conveyed or felt by their offspring through meals preparation.

The role of food and foodways

Food delivers its meaning through foodways which can be define using two fundamentally different ways: food preparation and food consumption. Foodways are considered one of the mechanisms of cultural knowledge transmission based on set of actions of preparing, serving as well as consuming (Rearick, 2009). However, according to Warde (1997), even though food preparation and cooking can be troublesome, it can also be a creative task. The repeated act of regularly performing this task enables the person performing it to be creative which makes it worth to explore instead of merely treating it as chores.

Food consumption, on the other hand, brings the meaning of food or substance that can be eaten by human or living things for the survival of life. As Luxton (1980) and Sullivan (1997) uttered in their studies, they stated that food is one of the most vital entity of consumption which has to be consume regularly and frequently for the continuance of life, and the right foods must be consume for an excellent of health (as cited in Kemmer, 2000). Both preparation and consumption are very important in the production of food, and through foodways, food can give even more glimmer in life – particularly between family members.

Food through foodways can develop a harmonious relationship between organisms, especially human. Kemmer (2000) affirmed that food through foodways portrays the relationships and connections between household members. The research prepared by Gofton (1986) is of the same ideology as Kemmer, whereby “food is the key in the relationships between group members – family”. Foodways familiarly related to the ingredients of food and the way the food is being prepared. It is also believed that foodways are linked to the internal phase of love and care between humans. Human express meaning through the transformation of food from the raw state to edible product by manipulating food combinations, cooking mode, colour, texture, taste, and form (Counihan, 1988).

Looking into the family constitution, the effort of father to find the finest food for his family as well as the role of mother to unwearyingly gather and prepare the food for her husband and kids have showed that food through foodways has helps the parent express their love messages towards their beloved kids. Religiously, in the keen of showing care, it is assumed that fathers in some culture will gather his family members, wife and kids and recites prayer before start eating. This has significantly brought a harmonious panorama in the family structure.

Besides reflecting the relationship between household members, foodways can also reflect the role of men and women. As mentioned before, food in the past can be defined using ways. Both ways, especially in food preparation, have considerably ignited that the deference was intimately related to the husbands’ role of wage earners, and wives’ as dependants and housewives (Kemmer, 2000). However, it is somewhat obvious that position on gender roles are changing especially with the emergence of modernization nowadays. Due to this phenomenon, the traditional gender roles dogma is questionable whether the role of fathers or men’s job now is to earn money? And the role of women and wives’ job is to look after the home and family.

Role of women through foodways

The role of men and women were established or set up long times ago. When that roles being started? In a few beliefs, the role of men and women as husband and wife and father and mother begin when they get marriage and have children. Traditionally, the role of men and women was established in order to dictate the power of the head of the household. As a result, a husband has been seen as the leader to the wife and their children, and automatically becomes the head of the household (Omadjohwoefe, 2011). Within the family setting, although males and females' roles have been considered to be of equal importance, more authority has generally been given to the husband (Schmitz & Diefenthaler, 1998).

Yesteryears, women play very important roles in the family institutions as a wife and a mother in the family organization (Idris, 2003). Few scholars have noted that women do more house chores compare to men (Ahmad, 1999; Eichler, 2002). A woman has been trained since childhood to do all the household chores by her parents especially mother. According to Kemmer (2000), women continue to carry the burden of responsibility for domestic tasks in most household. The wife's roles accepted more responsibility for task associated with child care, meal preparation, cleaning (Chodorow, 1974), family caretaker (Schmitz & Diefenthaler, 1998) and responsible in nurturing the children (Satterfield, 2001). It is therefore the responsible of women to manage the house, take care of the children and acts as a servant to the husband.

In term of relationship between a mother and a father with the children, it could be said that a mother is closer with her children compare to the father and the way a mother educates her children will influence the future of their children. The unique relationship between a mother and her children begin long before birth. A mother and her children have very strong tie, whereby a mother has total responsibility for how the children will turn out in the future. Nam (2010) and Chodorow (1974) noted that these unique bonds play very big roles in the child development. Women's universal mothering role has effects both on the development of masculine and feminine personality (Chodorow, 1974), and also play a significant

role in their children's education and occupation choices (Austen, 2004).

Generally believed, the responsibility of preparing food for the family has always been the task of the mother or wife. From the perspective of Malay old folks, there is no point for women to further their studies at high level because, at the end, they will end up staying at home and cook for their husband and children (Ibrahim, Nordin, Adzmin, & Jusoff, 2009). As a cook, a mother has an impact of what their children eat and how much they eat because normally, children prefer food which they are familiar with. A very good mother can determine the food likes and dislikes of their family members because she hold the position of head cook at home (Allen & Sachs, 2007).

According to Quaggiotto, (1987) a mother determines when, what and how much her family members will eat when she cooks at home, and the meals prepared by a mother usually symbolises herself and her family's lifestyle, culture and norm that might be different from other people's perception (as cited in Counihan .C.M, 1988). Belmonte, (1979) define the poor Neapolitan family as "mother-centred" and argue that the mother "is at the centre (as cited in Counihan .C.M, 1988) because she controls and distributes the twin sources of human vitality, food and love." But why do women prepare food for her husband and children? This is because to show appreciation and deliver her love towards her husband and children (Kemmer, 2000).

Usually food preparation is done by the mother or wife as to be served to her husband, children and family. It is done on a regular basis and consumes more time compared to other domestic labour (Luxton, 1980; Sullivan, 1997). Traditionally, it is known that the mothers or wives are the ones who responsible in the preparation of food from scratch which show how patient she is towards preparing food for her family. It could be said that all the household works years back were done by women solely.

Besides economic contributor towards the family, men or fathers also shoulder other responsibilities. Based on Department for Child

Protection (2007) and Rosado (1990), other roles that men need to play as a father are providing safety, care and protection towards the family. Moreover, Satterfield (2001) stated that fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families.

However, the traditional roles of men and women have changed considerably through the process of modernization. Modernization is characterized by high levels of industrialization, urbanization, education, wealth, and gender equality in public life (Yount, 2005). Industrialization is the process of developing industries that use machines to produce goods (Cohen, 2006). With industrialization, people could earn more money than they used to with farming. It not only develops a country's economy but also transforms the social conditions and class structures.

The cause of changes in division of task

A society is known to become modernized when it have achieve those characteristics. However, when modernization occurs, family structure will shift from vertically to neolocal residents which are basically living away from the husband's or wife's relatives (Lin, 2001). Modern families or non-traditional family are characterized by individualism, nuclear living arrangements, consensual marriage, and a high valuation of women (Yaunt, 2005). Urbanization and industrialization also have greatly increased geographic mobility and geographic separation between generations (Lin, 2001).

Modernization led people to live a better life whereby people in the modern world have better access for education. In fact, today's education system has given men and also women the equal opportunity to obtain knowledge thus, increasing the number of women with qualifications to enter the labour force (Kemmer, 2000). As we can see in most universities today, the proportion of young women with qualifications is now greater than young men. Both men and women now are entering the labour market in an equally competitive state. Today men and women frequently have ambitions and commitments in both work and family arenas (Amatea, Cross, Clark & Bobby, 1986). As there are changes in women's education and employment,

their traditional roles as the person who takes care of the home are bound to change as well.

However, working women in dual-earner families continue to be the one responsible to carry out most domestic task (Kemmer, 2000) such as cleaning, cooking and taking care of the children despite working to contribute to the family income as well. This creates a greater responsibility for women where they have to juggle both demanding task as their responsibility. The unequal division of household work among women and men in a household may result in family conflict (Ahmad, 1999). Modernization may lead to increased women's participation in labour force, greater possibilities for independence, and improvement of political rights, but it has also allowed in significant decrease in male's responsibilities and narrowed men's role as family protectors and providers (Arias & Palloni, 1999).

The pattern of distribution in food preparation tasks were much different and diverse compared to the stiff gendering of roles revealed by the earlier studies, which has less evidence in food preference among men (Kemmer, 2000). Until today, the number of men who involved in planning and preparing family meals is still small. Less than 30 percent of men were reported to be involved in these tasks (Mancino & Newman, 2007). However, this number is believed to increase as the number of women who join the labour force increased. This also happens because women start to demand for additional support and help from their spouses for over the last two decades (Gordon & Whelan-Berry, 2004).

Role of father

Murcott (1982, 1983) and Charles and Kerr (1988) stated that women previously express their gratitude towards their partner's responsibility to provide for the family by cooking for them (as cited in Kemmer, 2000). While men start to cook for their family both as a contribution in household tasks and to express their gratitude of her endeavour to increase their family income (Kemmer, 2000). This shows that men are slowly beginning to carry out the responsibility as a caregiver especially among younger parents. Dubeau (2002) in

her article, "The Involved Father", stated that men are now involved directly and emotionally in taking care of their children and no longer the sole provider. According to Harnack, Story, Martison, Neumark-Sztainer & Stang (1998), younger male were preferred to be involved in cooking for their family compared to older male which tend to keep traditional approach towards gender roles in preparing family meals. Caregivers are expected to give love and carry out the household tasks (Kaplan, 1999). However, many are still wondering whether men or father are able to carry out these tasks.

As a human, it is believe a father has to execute the responsibilities of a family leader, therefore fathers have their own role to play. Since few decades ago, it may appear obvious that the concept of adult manhood is defined perhaps universally, by societies, institutions, individuals and public policies in term of role of provider, sole breadwinner or working man (Ahmad, 1999; Kemmer, 2000; Rosado, 1990). Washburn and Lancaster (1968) noted that men in the old days act as a hunter while women play her role as a gatherer and took care of the domestic work (as cited in Gurven & Hill, 2009). As the economic provider to the family, father also contributes indirectly in food preparation process through the involvement of buying of raw materials.

A man who is able to carry out his tasks of being a good father definitely will give benefits to his children. As stated in Strategic Framework for Men in Their Role as Fathers by Department for Child Protection (2007), a father that directly involved in his children's lives and carry out his roles as a good father will build better chances and end result for the children. Other than that, Department for Child Protection (2007) also mentioned that a good father that involved positively in his children's lives will promote healthy psychological and emotional among his children.

As stated above, it is beyond doubt that there are numerous benefits to the children when their fathers involved in nurturing them. Hubbard (2004) in her article, "Why Children Need Fathers", mentioned that the latest research proved that children who have good relationships with their fathers will have an increase in mental development and they turn out to be more sociable. Allen and Daley (2002) con-

curred with the statement when they stated that children whose father is involved in their life will demonstrate better emotional, physical, cognitive and social skill (as cited in Sanders, Oates, & Kahn, 2009). Hubbard (2004) added that father who involved in taking care of their children will have happier and healthier life, and most probably will become more loving and less aggressive towards their spouses. Thus, this indicates that the father's involvement in his children's lives may give significant impacts to the future of the children.

DISCUSSION

The role of parents towards children has somehow changed especially when father is no longer a sole breadwinner. When women are entering the working field, the kitchen is less functioning thus mothers seldom communicates with their children. This turns out parents are not able to have close conversation with children during food preparation or meal time. The power of food cannot be belittle when Sabanci (2009) articulated that kitchen is the heart of home where meals being produced bind the family. Substances that make food are healthy for consumption is beyond dietary guidelines because it is associated with emotional support, care-giving and love (Debevec & Tivadar, 2006). Dubeau (2002) realize the roles of father to communicate feelings, emotionally in taking care of their children does not mean the roles of nurturing love is transferable but perhaps it is more of the process of sharing equal responsibility to children so that they are not feel abandoned. If the love of mother is delivered to her children through the preparation of food, father also might have the same potential to do the same thing in conveying it with a little twist of fatherhood approach.

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