



History of Empowerment: How Far Have We Come?

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INTRODUCTION

Diaz (2011) wrote “gender roles were forged in colonial spaces in ways that differed greatly from those that characterized European centers since the social composition of the American territories varied dramatically from their European counterparts” (p. 207). In retrospect, one could wonder how American women evolved from the portrayal of savage indigenous creatures to the likes of June Cleaver in the 1950s and the women’s empowerment movement of the twenty-first century.

Hannah Duston (born 1657) received accolades for her revenge against Native Americans. Her story is not much different than many indigenous Americans who found their family members kidnapped, abused, or murdered. The difference in Duston’s story is the public

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perception and outcome of her choices to avenge the death of her child and her own kidnapping. Duston, a colonial Massachusetts Puritan, is now known as an American colonial heroine and American folk hero. She was honored with three statues and a mountain in northern New Hampshire. Her statue is possibly the first of a female in America. Her story was published by Puritan Minister, Cotton Mather where “he described Duston as a righteous ringleader who had every reason to convince the other captives to act” in killing ten sleeping Indians, including six children. “Mather’s version of the death highlighted Indian violence to justify Duston’s gruesome vengeance” (Cutter, 2018).

The following native American women have also earned their place in history. Some portrayed as vicious savages and others as peacekeepers. This small sample of history is an attempt to encourage reflection of family heritage and to seek a unified future respecting human dignity for all. Nanye-hi (born 1738) earned the name *Ghighau* (Beloved Woman) of the Cherokee. According to Kettler (2020), Nanye-hi declared at a 1781 treaty conference, “Our cry is all for peace, let it continue. This peace must last forever.” Sacagawea (born 1788), a member of the Lemhi band of the Shoshone tribe, was kidnapped around age 12. She was brave and resourceful, as well as a multilingual speaker. She spoke Shoshone and Hidatsa, which proved invaluable to the expedition of Lewis and Clark. Sacagawea embarked on a long and challenging journey only two months after giving birth (Kettler, 2020). Mochi (born 1841), a Cheyenne survivor of the Sand Creek and Washita Massacres, who turned to revenge after the brutal murder of her family, was arrested in 1875 as the first Native American female prisoner. Unlike Dunston, Mochi is known as a savage, fierce, and vengeful warrior. Her accuser stated she was “a hardhearted, brutal, and cruel savage” (Richards, 2019, p. 17).

By the turn of the twentieth century, immigration and assimilation became more civil than in years past. Lerner (1975) described the typical American household in the 1920s as having marriage and traditional family values as a goal. Men worked long hours, and women cared for children and household tasks. Meleen (2006), explained “despite the image of the 1920s woman as independent and rebellious... each person within a household had male or female roles and saw the value in these tasks as a means to meet all the needs of the family as a whole.”

While considering characteristics of the first women on American soil, the transformation from survivalist to domesticated leads one to wonder how it all happened. Hawn (2017) wrote “there has been a significant

change in how often women are portrayed as having an existence not predicated on the home or domestic duties over time.” And, just as seen with Duston and Mochi, one may wonder how many reputations have stemmed from influenced public perception instead of fact-based reasoning.

CRITICAL THEORY

Critical theory was developed in the 1920s by members of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research (also known as the Frankfurt School). The following pioneers of critical theory drew on the work of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud: Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Jurgen Habermas, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Walter Benjamin. In 1933 the Frankfurt School, located in Germany, was closed by the Nazis; however, Horkheimer reestablished the school in New York. Current day figures, including Ben Shapiro, Jordan Peterson, and Melanie Phillips, consider the theorists an intellectual group of supervillains hell-bent on undermining western culture (Nicholas, 2020). In his book, *The Devil's Pleasure Palace: The Cult of Critical Theory and the Subversion of the West*, Walsh explains that critical theory was dedicated to the destruction of western civilization, specifically faith, family, and language (2017). Walsh states that Political Correctness and Diversity & Inclusion are tools in this effort to destroy the West as we know it and calls Saul Alinsky their famous disciple. The rapid growth of such Cultural Marxism ideas on American soil points to the university curriculum, including critical theory rhetoric and their complete control of American education (Cruiser, 2015). According to Walsh, Critical Theory says, “Let’s tear everything down” (ibid.).

POPULAR CULTURE AND FEMINISM

Arrow explained that popular culture was a way to brainwash women citing the 1968 “No More Miss America!” campaign and blaming soap operas for “reinforcing the image of male-dominated women” (2007, p. 214). In response, “if popular culture could perpetuate women’s oppression then used in the ‘right’ way, it could empower women as well” (p. 214). This same argument arose after the 2020 Super Bowl half-time performance featuring Jennifer Lopez and Shakira. Brown (2020)

wrote of the raunchy, sexually explicit halftime show on primetime television, watched by millions of families together. *USA Today* reported the performance as empowering, not objectifying, women, citing age and the #MeToo movement (Yasharoff, 2020). However, Franklin Graham, a Christian evangelist stated:

I don't expect the world to act like the church, but our country has had a sense of moral decency on primetime television in order to protect children. We see that disappearing before our eyes. It was demonstrated tonight in the Pepsi Super Bowl Halftime Show—with millions of children watching. This exhibition was Pepsi showing young girls that sexual exploitation of women is okay. With the exploitation of women on the rise worldwide, instead of lowering the standard, we as a society should be raising it. I'm disappointed in Pepsi and the NFL.

BOOKS

McCabe, Fairchild, Grauerholz, Pescosolido, and Tope (2011) reviewed 5618 books spanning 101 years of American children's literature. They found an apparent disparity; whereas, "males are represented more frequently than females in titles and as central characters" (p. 207). Interestingly, the researchers found more female characters in books in the early and later years of the twentieth century; whereas, mid-century books featured more males (p. 215). The research by McCabe et al. (2011) is summed up in saying:

Gender is a social creation; cultural representation, including that in children's literature, is a key source in reproducing and legitimating gender systems and gender inequality. The messages conveyed through representation of males and females in books contribute to children's ideas of what it means to be a boy, girl, man, or woman. The disparities we find point to the symbolic annihilation of women and girls, and particularly female animals, in 20th Century children's literature, suggesting to children that these characters are less important than their male counterparts.

According to Arrow, feminist novels "played a crucial role in the broader public acceptance of feminist ideals" (Arrow, 2007, p. 215). Cote noted the literary work of Astrid Lindgren and the 1945 introduction of Pippi Longstocking as "the most uncompromising – and uncompromised – children's heroines from the 20th Century." Cote remembers Pippi as

an orphan whose mother died and father was lost at sea; therefore, nine-year-old Pippi “lives alone with a pet monkey and resists with vivacity adult’s attempts to corral her into conventional childhood activities.” In 1955, Beverly Cleary introduced Ramona Quimby as the American cousin of Pippi Longstocking. Cote explains the two characters were “bright beacons for little girls who have been variously told they are too much: too loud or pesky or hyperactive” (p. 40).

Many books are now available for children’s literature that boldly proclaim women’s liberation and female empowerment. The list includes *Born to Ride*, published in 2019 by Larissa Theule set in the 1890s warning women if they ride a bicycle, their eyes could bulge, and their jaw could clench. *How Kate Warne Saved President Lincoln*, published in 2016 by Elizabeth Van Steenwyk, refers to the investigation of an important woman who played a role in American history as she partners with the Pinkerton detective agency to uncover a plot to assassinate the president. *Rosie Revere Engineer*, published in 2013 by Chris Ferrie, is about a young girl with various inventions and a history of mockery for her imagination until her aunt arrives to encourage her.

MUSIC

Music is a powerful mechanism for influencing society. The Library of Congress notes music has served a paramount role in the women’s suffrage movement. Their collection of sheet music spanned 1838–1923 and includes “rally songs and songsters written and compiled by notable composers and suffragists” (Hayden, 2020). Since the 1920s, hundreds, if not thousands, of songs were written and incorporated into the American culture to empower women to do more.

O’Connor (2017) wrote, “the logical assumption...would be to assume that the women of country music follow a similar conservative political path. However, when compared to the Women’s Liberation Movement, a largely leftist political movement, we can see that ultimately this is not true” (p. ii). To expand, O’Connor notes that Kitty Wells music is an “often-contradictory understanding of the role of the housewife, as she appears prominently as a pioneer within the genre and her family’s primary breadwinner” (p. ii). Tammy Wynette’s music, according to O’Connor, focuses on consciousness-raising. And Loretta Lynn’s lyrics “subvert what is expected of her as a Southern woman” (p. ii).

Helen Reddy's 1972 song, *I am Woman*, became the feminist anthem for the 1970s women's movement, and the one song Reddy is best known for (Arrow, 2007). Her lyrics, "I am strong, I am invincible, I am woman" contributed to her receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award for her work with the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Reddy's song reached women that were not part of the formalized Women's Liberation Movement. The song "was a potent, widely accessible feminist text that reached many women who might otherwise have had little awareness of the possibilities women's liberation might offer" (Arrow, 2007, p. 214).

Table 1.1 records titles of feminist anthems through the decades. With music censorship, it is astounding that such songs were allowed in the period they were released. However, this music pushed boundaries and contributed to changing American culture. Finan (2020) wrote that congress created the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 1934 to monitor "radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable." As examples, Finan documents a 1948 raid in Memphis where police confiscate and destroy records deemed obscene. In 1954, the Boston Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) demanded radio stations stop playing music with obscene or sexually explicit lyrics fearing the music would stir hormones. In 1955, Elvis was threatened with arrest if he continued gyrating his pelvis while performing; he was later filmed from the waist up on the 1957 Ed Sullivan Show. And, in 1955, Nat King Cole was assaulted on stage by members of the White Citizen's Council of Birmingham, Alabama. They argued such music played by black musicians was a "plot to mongrelize America by bringing out an animalism in people through the use of heavy beats in their music."

THE ROARING 20S

The 1920s is a period in American history known as the Roaring 20s due to the prosperity of the American workforce. This decade, "was the beginning of the modern era as we know it" (Amadeo, 2020). Many households obtained uncommon, even unheard-of items that most consider necessities in the twenty-first century. Such goods included automobiles, blenders, microwaves, ovens, radios, refrigerators, vacuums, and washing machines.

Along with economic success of the country, came the "first generation of independent American women" (Buccieri, 2018). Prohibition opened the door to speakeasies, which supplied the demand for music, dance,

Table 1.1 Feminist anthems through the decades

<i>Year released</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Singer</i>
1908	Take Me Out to the Ballgame	Jack Norworth and Albert Von Tizer
1910	March of the Women	Ethel Smuth and Cicely Hamilton
1923	Same Jones Blues	Bessie Smith
1924	Cell Bound Blues	Gertrude "Ma" Rainey
1924	There'll Be Some Changes Made	Marion Harris
1929	I'm the Last of the Red-Hot Mamas	Sophie Tucker
1929	I want to Be Bad	Helen Kane
1935	You Let Me Down	Billie Holiday
1952	It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels	Kitty Wells
1963	You Don't Own Me	Lesley Gore
1965	Paths of Victory	Odetta
1966	Four Women	Nina Simone
1967	Respect	Aretha Franklin
1967	Different Drum	Stone Poneys with Linda Ronstadt
1967	Do Right Woman, Do Right Man	Aretha Franklin
1968	Just Because I am a Woman	Dolly Parton
1968	Harper Valley PTA	Jeannie C. Riley
1972	Sisters, O Sisters	Yoko Ono
1972	I am Woman	Helen Reddy
1973	Don't Put Her Down	Hazel Dickens
1975	The Pill	Loretta Lynn
1976	Cherry Bomb	The Runaways
1978	I will Survive	Gloria Gaynor
1978	I'm Every Woman	Chaka Khan
1979	No More Tears	Donna Summer and Barbara Streisand
1980	9 to 5	Dolly Parton
1980	Bad Reputation	Joan Jett & the Blackhearts
1980	I'm Coming Out	Diana Ross
1986	Nasty	Janet Jackson
1992	Bikini Kill	Rebel Girl
1993	U.N.I.T.Y.	Queen Latifah
1993	Girls, Girls, Girls	Liz Phair
1993	Keep Ya Head Up	2Pac

(continued)

Table 1.1 (continued)

<i>Year released</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Singer</i>
1995	Just a Girl	No Doubt
1996	Guys Do It All the Time	Mindy McCready
1997	Man! I Feel Like a Woman	Shania Twain
1999	No Scrubs	TLC
2001	Independent Women	Destiny's Child
2001	I'm A Survivor	Reba McEntire
2002	Survivor	Destiny's Child
2002	I am Beautiful	Christina Aguilera
2003	This Ones for the Girls	Martina McBride
2005	Phenomenal Woman	Olivia Newton John
2005	Somebody's Hero	Jamie O'Neal
2007	Just Fine	Mary J. Blige
2007	Mother of Pearl	Nellie McKay
2007	Gunpowder and Lead	Miranda Lambert
2007	All-American Girl	Carrie Underwood
2009	She Wolf	Shakira
2011	Born this Way	Lady Gaga
2011	Run the World (Girls)	Beyonce
2012	Bad Girls	MIA
2012	Girl on Fire	Alicia Keys
2013	Q.U.E.E.N	Janelle Monae and Erykah Badu
2014	Flawless	Beyonce
2015	Wonder Woman	Lion Babe
2016	Don't Touch my Hair	Solange
2016	Tomboy	Princess Nokia
2017	Bodak Yellow	Cardi B
2017	Doves in the Wind	SZA
2017	No Man is Big Enough for my Arms	Ibeyi
2017	Quiet	Milck
2017	Woman	Kesha
2018	Girls Need Love	Summer Walker
2018	God is a Woman	Ariana Grande
2018	Nameless, Faceless	Courtney Barnett
2018	Pynk	Janelle Monae
2019	Juice	Lizzo

and alcohol. Attending those infamous, hidden party rooms were young women dressed in rakish attire. Buccieri wrote, the women “donned fashionable flapper dresses of shorter, calf-revealing lengths and lower necklines. Instead of corsets, flappers wore high heels, bras, and lingerie along with their straight and slim dress. The ladies cut their hair in short bob-style fashion and doused their faces with lipstick, mascara, and rouge.”

CONSERVATIVE 1950S

The 1950s was a time of cultured, sophisticated, and economically advantaged homes. Families ate dinner together and had a sense of moral family values. June Cleaver, the quintessential housewife on the *Leave it to Beaver* television show (1957–1963), was the “archetypal 1950s woman the second wave of the Women’s Movement was trying to liberate” (Whiting, 2013). In one episode, Beaver says “Girls have got it lucky...They don’t have to be smart. They don’t have to get jobs or anything. Alls they gotta do is get married.” He continues to say, “women who do not get married could do a bunch of “dumb stuff” like “become dressmakers or cut people’s nails in the barber shop or take care of kids.” To this, June tells her son, “Well, Beaver, today girls can be doctors and lawyers too, you know. They’re just as ambitious as boys are.” Hawn (2017) analyzed 1250 American television commercials spanning 1970–2016 with a specially designed test, The June Cleaver Test, to establish if June Cleaver, the perfectly dressed domesticated woman, and happy homemaker was a relevant label for today’s modern women. Hawn found women were usually portrayed in domestic roles and were more likely to appear as sex objects instead of seen in occupational roles. Hawn noted, “June cleaver has not so much left the kitchen; instead, she has just updated her wardrobe” (p. ii).

SOCIAL REVOLUTION OF THE 1960S

The 1960s started as a time of hope for a better future. This period is known for movements that broke barriers of preexisting social norms through media, protests, and legalities coining phrases such as *flower power* and *make love not war*. Buccieri (2010) wrote of the high expectation and confidence with President Kennedy at the helm stating the country believed they were at the dawn of the Golden Age; however,

“on the contrary, by the end of the 1960s, it seemed that the nation was falling apart.”

The Vietnam war spanned 1955–1975, and the United States Selective Service lotteries were held between 1969 and 1972, drafting 2.2 million American men. Approximately 7,500 women served in Vietnam. According to Veterans Affairs, 80% of the women were nurses (Aponte et al., 2015). Women were not allowed to serve in combat until 2013 (Carlisle, 2017).

Throughout the 1960s, the anti-Vietnam war movement, Civil Rights movement, student movement, and women’s movement all continued to spread. In 1968, women protested outside of the Miss America Pageant, throwing items that symbolized oppression into a *Freedom Trash Can* sparking a feminist revolution (Gay, 2018). Hippies and Flower Children flocked to the 1969 Woodstock Music and Art Fair. It seemed as if most people had a cause to stand up and fight for. According to Dunn-Froebig (2006), women’s liberation paralleled with the countercultural movement. In her study, she found that this period encouraged “counterculture parents with gender egalitarian values [to talk] to their children about fairness, occupations, and marriage” (p. 24).

Carlisle (2017) documented things that were off-limits to women in the 1960s. In sports, the first woman to run the Boston marathon as Kathrine Switzer in 1967. In 1972, six women were permitted to run in the New York City Marathon with the condition that they start 10 minutes before the men. In dissent, they sat down when the starting pistol sounded. While many American universities did not have sports for women, Lewis (2019) notes the first women’s basketball team in America was at Smith College in 1892.

In school, women could not ask for legal help until Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Women also could not go to military academies until President Ford opened training facilities in 1975. West Point Academy welcomed its first female class in 1976 (Schloesser, 2010). Ivy League schools were male-only until Yale accepted women in 1969. Because of the lack of educational opportunities, women were limited in their career options, and becoming astronauts was one role they were not eligible to fulfill until 1983 when Sally Ride became the first American woman to explore space.

Women could not sit on a jury until the 1975 case of *Taylor vs. Louisiana*. The first woman to serve on the Supreme Court was Sandra Day O’Conner in 1981. In the workplace, women were viewed as the

weaker sex; they were unable to have work that needed physical exertion equal to that of a man (Carlisle, 2017). Carlisle noted that “until the 1964 Civil Rights Act, there was no legal protection for women in the workforce who were treated differently due to their gender.” As such, if a working woman in the 1960s became pregnant, she was expected to become a full-time mother. This unwritten rule was not overridden until the 1978 Pregnancy Discrimination Act. A 1969 class-action lawsuit with Colgate-Palmolive and female union employees stated the women were “intentionally discriminated against by a system of job classification which deprived them of various opportunities in the plant and that they were subjected to discriminatory layoffs under a segregated plant seniority system based on the employee’s sex” (Stanley, n.d.).

In most states, women could not cohabit with their boyfriend as there was a ban on unwed couples living together. Florida, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia still have anti-cohabitation laws (Wright, 2018). Women in the 1960s could not get a credit card of their own as most women were not financially independent from men. This unwritten rule changed with the 1974 Equal Credit Opportunity Act. Women could not breastfeed in public in the 1960s without fear of persecution. McCall (2016) explained that nursing, in general, was not an issue during the colonial era; however, once the “modern feeding bottle and nipple were invented,” the act of breastfeeding declined steadily until the 1970s. A wife could also not refuse sexual relations with their husband until 1983 when most states amended their laws to account for marital rape. Legally, women could not file for divorce until 1969 when Ronald Reagan, as Governor of California, introduced the no-fault divorce bill, which was later adopted by other states.

PEST MILESTONES

Much change has taken place in American society on the topic of gender equality in the past 100 years. Movements have come, and some have gone, but their residue has unmistakably left an impression on the current culture. If women’s rights were an industry, and some may argue that elements of it are, analytical tools would assist in understanding the marketplace and the resulting environment better. Such a mechanism could measure the impact of political, economic, social/cultural, and technological (PEST) contexts on business. These four environments are

always changing, and over the past century have had a profound effect on the role of women in the workplace.

POLITICAL

Labor. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, leagues and laws have aimed at giving women equal footing in the workplace. The Women's Trade Union League (established in 1903) was founded to support women in the workplace, specifically with fair wages and to enhance working conditions. By the end of World War I (WWI) (1914–1918), women made up 20% of the manufacturing workforce (Todd-Smith, 2020). These women took on roles traditionally held by men.

Voting rights. Women gained the right to vote across the nation in 1920, with the ratification of the 19th Amendment. This same year, the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor formed and women's causes banded together to follow their vested interests. Their approach to women's equality was not in unison; on the contrary, they became competing efforts (Blum, 1991, pp. 35–36).

Abortion rights. In the United States, it was the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* Supreme Court case that gave women the legal right to an abortion and the opportunity to continue pursuing careers without any *unplanned* interference. The American population has never united on the abortion debate. Some view it as murder, while others view it as freedom of choice. According to Jones and Jerman (2017), abortion rates have declined since 2008, where 30% of women 45 years of age had chosen abortion at some point in their life. By 2017, this rate fell to 23.7%. It is estimated that in 2019, 42.4 million babies were aborted worldwide (Showalter, 2020).

First-wave feminism. The “first wave” of feminism spanned from 1848–1920 where women gained the right to own property, regardless if they were single or married. Women also had the right to keep their wages, sign contracts on their own, and take someone to court (Dicker, 2008, p. 6). The right to vote in 1920 was the capstone of this period.

Second-wave feminism. This “second wave” of feminism began with the release of Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*, in 1963. More than three million copies of the book sold in just three years. During this period the Equal Pay Act of 1963 addressed the gender pay gap, women (both married and unmarried) gained the right to reproductive choices of birth control and abortion, and Title IX improved the educational opportunities for women across the country.

ECONOMIC

War. Women reached new heights and gained significant ground in “wages, unionization, and job opportunities during the war years” (Chafe, p. 175). However, with the end of the war and the return of men, there was a shift as the role of women in the workplace was questioned, although they had proven their abilities to do the work at hand. Even Senator Harry Truman chimed in, stating that “they are entitled to the chance to earn a good living at jobs they have shown they can do” (Chafe, p. 176). Once men returned, much of the work reverted back to men so they could “provide” for their families. If a woman was working in a traditional men’s role, it was thought she was taking the livelihood of another family. Many women were relegated to traditional roles in the personal service realm. Such positions included domestic service, apparel manufacturing, and telephone/telegraph communication services (Joiner & Weiner, 1942, pp. 5–6).

Recession. Throughout 1960–1999, the labor participation rate of women grew to 60 percent. Since the height of 1999, the participation rate of women in the workplace has declined. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, this decline is not offset with more men in the labor force. It can, consequently, be identified as a significant contributor to an overall reduction in the labor force participation rate (Toosi & Morisi, 2017, p. 2).

SOCIAL/CULTURAL

Unmarried women in the early 1900s worked mainly in clerical roles or as teachers. Once married, women assumed the roles of full-time wives and mothers (Barnett, 2004; Schreiner, 2017).

Sexual revolution. Birth control pills in the 1960s offered women the freedom to have sex without consequences. A shift in society’s moral code was evolving. The pill reduced the fear of pregnancy, during a cultural time of “make love, not war” from the Vietnam War era, and this took a possible barrier, or excuse away to say “no” (Kotz, 2010). The 1960s launched a shift in societal views of right and wrong, morals became relative instead of absolute, and the acceptance of behavior that felt good and was not harming anyone (Drake, 1964).

Female role expectations. Debate prevails around the role and worth of women. The feminist argument is that women have equal rights on all

levels in the workplace, home, and in all opportunities. The charge to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was born out of this philosophical soil. Schlafly (2007) proposes the amendment could accomplish the following:

... require women to be drafted into military combat any time men were conscripted, abolish the presumption that the husband should support his wife, and take away Social Security benefits for wives and widows. It would also give federal courts and the federal government enormous new powers to reinterpret every law that makes a distinction based on gender, such as those related to marriage, divorce, and alimony.

Women of the baby-boom era have participated in a significant shift weaving together lives that include marriage, work, and parenting. It is reported that “In 1967 one-half of all women in their thirties were married mothers and full-time homemakers; by 1982 only one-fourth of women in their thirties held this traditional role” (McLaughlin et al., 1988, p. 198). This shift created a greater need for childcare and preschool options.

Women also marry and have children later. In 1960, the median age of women marrying for the first time was 20.3. This number rose to 26.6 by 2013 (Clark, 2020). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average age of marriage in 2018 was 29.8 for men and 27.8 for women (Jordan, 2018). And, the birth rate in American is now at the lowest point in over a century, according to Frey (2019).

TECHNOLOGICAL

Home appliances. Before the twentieth century, the bulk of a woman’s day was spent doing work that modern women never consider because of technological advancements. Appliances dramatically changed lives of women globally. Automobiles, blenders, microwaves, ovens, radios, refrigerators, vacuums, washing machines, etc., have a liberating effect on women who traditionally spent the bulk of their day doing household chores. Research of Coen-Pirani, Leon, and Lugauer (2010) concludes the significant increase of women (married women, specifically) in the workplace is not tied directly to technology; however, such advances have influenced the economy and society in positive ways (p. 512). Women simply had more time available to pursue other interests.

Birth control. Advertising for birth control in the United States was prohibited in 1873 with the Comstock Act. The United States Postal Service was empowered to confiscate any such device distributed through the mail. In 1916, Margaret Sanger opened the first birth control clinic in the United States. Sanger was arrested at least eight times, charged with being a public nuisance (Larson, 1993). In 1929, Sanger’s Birth Control Research Bureau was raided, and she was arrested for “giving out demoralizing information and advice” (Larson, 1993). By 1938, the Comstock Act was abolished, and diaphragms, also known as womb veils, became the favored method of birth control. In 1950, Sanger raised \$150,000 to conduct research developing the first birth control pill. In 1960, the first pill was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Thompson (2013) noted that in 1965, the Supreme Court granted permission to married couples to choose if they wanted to use birth control; however, unmarried women were not allowed the same choice since the traditional family value system encouraged virginity until marriage. In 1972, the Supreme Court announced that all citizens, regardless of marital status, were allowed to use birth control. From 1968—today, the controversy around birth control has focused on safety. Over the years, birth control devices such as the Dalkon Shield, Ortho Evra Patch, NuvaRing, and Yasmin/Yaz, have seen their fair share of lawsuits.

Computer. The rise of computers in the workplace grew dramatically in the early 1990s. By 1993 nearly fifty percent of employees were working on computers (Weinberg, 2000, p. 290). Weinberg proposes the increase in the use of computers had a restructuring effect. It diminished the emphasis on physical ability, which opened the door to higher demand for female workers (p. 305).

DEMOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE OF THE WORKPLACE

Shifts in the Demographic Landscape of the Workplace

Much has changed in the workplace over the last century. Women in the 1950s were usually homemakers (once they married), and if they were in the workplace, they had lower-paying jobs traditionally categorized as “helper” positions (secretaries, teachers, service industries, etc.). By 2008, women were contributors to approximately 45% of their total family income (Hartmann, 2008, p. 2). According to the Center for American

Progress “64.2% of mothers were primary, sole, or co-breadwinners for their families” in 2017 (Seeberger, 2019).

Between 1940 and 1999, there was an increase in the number of women in the workforce (Toossi, 2002, p. 15). In looking at the total pool of men and women workers in 1950, women made up 34 percent of the workplace. This number grew to 46.5 percent by 2000 and is projected to increase to 47.2 by 2024 (Toossi & Morisi, 2017). Although women make up nearly half of the workforce, barriers still exist between women and executive positions (Schwanke, 2013). The number of female CEOs running America’s largest companies has hit an all-time high with 37 women at the helm in the Fortune 500 (Henchliffe, 2020).

SHIFTS IN GENDER POSITIONS OF POWER

Progress in women rising to positions of power has not kept up with the growing number of women in the workplace despite the fact that women have outearned men in bachelor’s degrees since 1982, master’s degrees since 1987, and doctorate degrees since 2006 (Perry, 2013). Although more women have achieved mid-management positions of power they are still underrepresented in executive positions. Schwanke (2013) advocates there is confusion due to media and cultural references showing far more women in executive positions than what is taking place (p. 1). Jordan (2019) proposes that the #MeToo movement could continue this stall in women achieving higher positions of power as mentoring is often a necessary component to progressing into executive positions. This movement is one that could cause reluctance for men to mentor capable women because of fear that a situation may come up within the mentorship where they are falsely accused of sexual harassment (p. 1).

Diekman and Eagly (2000) explain that social role theory recognizes stereotypes as a barometer of expectations and claim gender stereotypes are dynamic, and culture embeds new expectations for gender roles (p. 1172). The authors identified “the belief that women’s personality, cognitive, and physical attributes will continue to become more like those of men should increase women’s access to male-dominated roles and to socialization and training opportunities that will allow them to assume these roles” (p. 1186).

Eagly and Karau (2002) expanded on social role theory introducing role congruity theory of prejudice and evaluated how discrimination

stands in the way of women acquiring exclusive executive positions (p. 573) noting the following:

- “Women were less effective than men to the extent that leadership positions were male-dominated.
- Female leaders became less effective relative to male leaders as the proportion of male subordinates increased.
- The greater the proportion of men among the raters, the less was the effectiveness of women relative to men.
- Women were substantially less effective than men in military organizations (a traditionally masculine environment) but modestly more effective than men in organizations in the domains of education, government, and social service.
- Women fared particularly well in effectiveness, relative to men, in middle-level leadership positions, as opposed to line or supervisory positions” (p. 586).

As shown throughout this chapter, powerful forces are at play with regard to the role of women in the home, at work, and in society. Reflection of how American women emerged from savage warrior, to quintessential housewife, to modern-day leader demonstrates that women are able to change. Now, the focus should be on the role(s) women desire in the future as a strategic plan is put in place to fulfill the mission. For some, it may be a return to the domesticated housewife. And, for others, it may include a seat at the head of a Fortune 500 table.

CHAPTER TAKEAWAYS

Critical theory demonstrates intentionality to change the future. In this case, the purpose for change was to first domesticate the savage survivalist into the modern housewife and then transform the quintessential woman into a sexual artifact. This chapter reviewed the political, economic, social/cultural, and technological (PEST) roots of the women’s liberation movements. Additionally, this text examined the impact of media from a critical theory point of view with respect to the advancement of equality for women. While it is clear the movement has progressed, it is unclear if all agree on the desired outcome of feminist expectations for

the future. To move forward with more intention in a purposeful movement it is recommended that we take a step back and reflect on the roles of men and women in the past to carefully craft the vision for the future.

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