2-25-2015

Four Eras of the Twentieth Century Family: The Female Role within the Family and the Female Role within Higher Education

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FOUR ERAS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY FAMILY: THE FEMALE ROLE WITHIN THE FAMILY AND THE FEMALE ROLE WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

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B.S.Ed, Illinois State University, 2011

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Science in Education

Department of Educational Administration and Higher Education
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
May 2015

RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

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for the Degree of

Master of Science in Education

in the field of Educational Administration and Higher Education

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

RACHEL SMITH, for the Master's of Science in Education degree in EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION, presented on FEBRUARY 25, 2015, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: FOUR ERAS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY FAMILY: THE FEMALE ROLE WITHIN THE FAMILY AND THE FEMALE ROLE WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Patrick Dilley

This research paper addresses the fluid nature of the American family structure and how that structure changes over time. Sometimes the family structure progresses forward and makes positive gains in equality between husband and wife and in some instances regresses back. Many facets of American life have influences on the structure of the family. Government control and governmental freedom, no education and higher education, economic prosperity and economic downturn, the United States and those who live within it are always in motion.

Throughout the twentieth century, the changing family structures, caused by changes within American society, fit into four distinct eras of the American family; the Progressive Era family, the Depression era family, the "Traditional" era family, and the "Modern" era family. This paper will examine the four eras of the American family in two parts. First, exploring the structure of the family within each era and the female's role within that structure and next, exploring the female's role within higher education and how that higher education affected the female's role within the family structures and within society.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE PAGE

The American family structure is a fluid structure, a structure that changes over time. Sometimes the family structure progresses forward and makes positive gains in equality between husband and wife and in some instances regresses back. Many facets of American life have influences on the structure of the family. Government control and governmental freedom, no education and higher education, economic prosperity and economic downturn, the United States and those who live within it are always in motion.

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Four Eras of the American Family and the Female Role

A survey done in the 1990s by family and marriage historian Stephanie Coontz asked family history students to write down ideas that spring to mind when they think of the family structure in the twentieth century. A popular image that comes to the forefront is of the nuclear families in which nurturing mothers stayed at home to play house and shelter their children, while the fathers worked hard to support the family. Meanwhile, there remains a deep sense of love and intimacy between husband and wife (Coontz, 1992). Some students even envision this structure with extended families also included, in which all members work together, with grandparents as an integral part of family life, and children learn respect and work ethic from their elders (Coontz, 1992). These types of loving and happy visions of past family life exert a

powerful emotional pull given the flimsiness of many modern commitments, but what many of these students fail to consider is that this ideal image of the family, in most cases, is not realistic (Coontz, 1992). Like most ideas of what it means to be a family, upon closer examination, this family design is not and never has existed in the same time and place. These aspects of the family; intense love, extended families, mother at home and father working, are all elements of different eras of families that have existed over the course of the twentieth century, but never simultaneously (Coontz, 1992).

The twentieth century family structures are divided up into four notable eras each displaying different characteristics of the ideal family structure unique to its time; Progressive Families, Depression Families, "Traditional" Families, and Modern Families. Throughout the first half of this paper, I will examine each era closely and analyze the structure of a family at that time, the women's role within the family structure, and the unique qualities or characteristics of each individual era that have an affect on the family structures. Before any analysis of twentieth century family structures and the female role can occur, it is imperative to understand the history of how and why family units began and the role that history plays in family structures going forward.

History of Marriage and the Family

To fully analyze the history of twentieth century family structures and the female roles within those structures requires a brief look at the history of marriage and the initial creation of the family. Although the role of marriage changes from society to society, the general premise remains the same. For thousands of years, marriage served as a way in which individuals could accumulate resources and was primarily an economic and political transaction. Finding a husband was usually the most important investment a woman could make in her economic future

through his financial support and for men marriage could mean free labor from his wife and children (Coontz, 2005). In addition, since the dawn of civilization, obtaining in-laws through marriage has been one of marriage's most important functions, again for free and additional labor hands (Coontz, 2005). Traditionally, the union of a man and woman in marriage was to form a structure of teamwork where each partner provided different skill sets to ensure their survival. The division of labor and power in the new family unit was organized by gender and age, confirming men's authority over women and the children (Coontz, 2005).

Certainly, people fell in love and had children during those thousands of years, but marriage was not fundamentally about love or children. It was about the political and economic institution for survival through male-delegated teamwork and extended family ties (Coontz, 2005). From this historical view on marriage, the initial structure of the family was born and since, it has been ever evolving. This initial structure of the family set the tone for future eras of the family. The concepts of teamwork amongst husband and wife through each partner providing different skill sets, marriages to obtain extended families and husband's dominance over the wife are old-fashioned aspects of the first marriages and still traceable in family structures throughout the twentieth century.

Table 1
Female Role in the Family during the Twentieth Century

Era	Family Structure	Female Role	Unique Elements of the Era
Progressive Era Families (1900s-1929)	- Homogeneous and nuclear structure caused by governmental control - Child labor was banned in favor of education - Increased men's working wages so women could be homemakers - Social workers intervened with troubled families	- Homemaker - Nurture children - Law prevented married women from joining the labor force - Some women were trapped in bad marriages because of their dependence on men to survive economically	- Beginning of media displaying gender roles - Negative reaction to the elimination of child labor - Eugenics - The onset of WWI and the flapper woman - The Women's Suffrage Movement
Depression Era Families (1929-1945)	- Economic struggle - Children had to work to help support the family - Families doubled up on rent and took in boarders - Men took to the roads looking for employment - Marriage and children were delayed	- Unpaid workload (laundry, sewing, cooking) in the home increased to create a less expensive lifestyle - Influx of married women in the workforce to help counteract their husband's loss of employment or deployment to war	- Public reaction to married women's employment was inconsistent, but generally positive - Children looked down upon their mothers for their gain in employment
Traditional Era Families (1945 - Mid- 1960s)	- Nuclear family structure caused by governmental freedom and gifts - Cultural consensus that everyone should marry and form a male breadwinner family - Men and women feel pressured into the constructed family roles	- "Ultimate fulfillment in the home." - Women put careers aside - Increase in domestic technology - Some women entered into loveless marriages because that is what society expected - Husbands had legal rights to control their wives - Many women felt trapped	- The American economy was flourishing more than in ever had - There was an influx in birthrates called the "baby boom" - The publication of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan ignited the Women's Liberation Movement
Modern Era Families (Mid-1960s-1990s)	- No longer one set structure that constitutes a family - Cohabitation - Children born out of wedlock - Increased divorce rates - Nuclear families only make up about 25% of families - Marriage is not considered the only transition into adulthood	- Equal employment opportunities - Women are not financially dependent on men - More female breadwinners - Childbearing is no longer tightly linked to marriage - Second- shift - More freedom over sexuality with the mass distribution of birth control	- The Women's Liberation Movement and the fight for gender equality - Marriage is no longer a need, but a want - Researchers fear the impacts of single-parent homes on children - Misconception that co-provider families are a new in human history

Table 1: The four eras of the American family and the family structures present during each era, the female's role in that structure, and unique elements throughout each era.

Progressive Era Families (1900s - 1929)

Progressive Era families serve as the first notable family structure of the twentieth century, spanning from the later decades of the nineteenth century until the start of the Great Depression in 1929. The Progressive Era marks a time in which the American government entirely transformed their policies and laws from a roughly freewheeling-independent system to one of state planning and control. This increase in government control is attributed to America completing a rapid shift from a farming society to an urban society caused by an influx of immigrants to the country (Peden & Glahe, 1986). This newly intensified governmental control caused changes within the realm of marriage regulations and therefore the shape of selected aspects of American family life. These governmental changes made many impacts on American families such as creating a distinct family structure to this time, forcing women in a stereotypical "wifely" role within that family structure, and bringing about many elements of the family unique to this era.

The governmental influences during the Progressive era supported changes in social policy to create a more culturally homogenous and nuclear family structure. One way they accomplished this goal was through a movement called the family preservation movement. During the family preservation movement, the government passed many laws to closely regulate family life and structure. Laws were passed to enable working-class children to attend school by banning child labor, to improve housing and sanitation to the point that domestic life became possible, for the first time, for many immigrant and poor city dwellers, and to increase the male's working wage so women's work could be limited to the home (Coontz, 1992). The Progressive Era also brought about the modern social work movement in which trained social workers intervened in families experiencing problems that threatened the well-being of family members and affected the community: physical abuse, drug or alcohol addiction, neglect, or abandonment

were not considered means for a divorce (Peden & Glahe, 1986). Regardless of the situation, Progressive era families felt governmental expectations to make their marriage work and divorce was rarely an option. With this family structure in place, many Progressive Era men and women married and then conformed into living the roles of husband and wife.

During the Progressive Era, the government attempted, often times successfully, to place women in a distinct role within the family structure; to stay home to keep house and nurture the children. In the year 1913, the year in which the US Department of Labor first started compiling statistics, only two to three percent of married women were in the job market at all (Maushart, 2001). A majority of wives managed their households and children as their husbands served as breadwinners to provide for the family. These figures underestimate the real contributions wives made to household income. Many wives contributed paid work, such as taking in World War I soldiers as boarders or selling homemade items, which remains unreported on census calculations (Coontz, 1992). The fact remains that the Progressive Era was a period when female labor-force participation (except for black women) was extremely low (Coontz, 1992). Although every decade throughout the Progressive Era saw a slight increase in married women's representation in the labor force, the reentry of married women into mainstream production did not occur until several decades into the twentieth century (Coontz, 1992).

This era also saw the distribution of household technology and the mass production of food and clothes, allowing many women to be relieved of many household duties, and even married women should have been free to take on work outside the home at a much higher rate than they did (Coontz, 1992). Moreover, the average number of children a woman bore had been reducing dramatically from 4.24 in 1880 to 3.56 in 1900 (Coontz, 1992). At the same time, single female labor grew rapidly after 1900, as the clerical and sales industries multiplied.

Female labor was desired because their home duties were thought to have prepared them for people please as well as maintaining a level of submissiveness and they also did not have to be paid as much as men (Coontz, 1992). With less household duties to tend to and less children to care for occurring simultaneously as the increased demand for female labor, one would think more married women would have joined the workforce. Conversely, during the Progressive Era, the government created laws to promote a nuclear family with men on the market side and women on the household side, and these laws prevented married women from entering the workforce.

While single women entered the workforce in growing numbers, married women held back partly because they were less educated than the younger women, but mostly because there were serious barriers to their entry in the way work was organized and hiring was conducted (Coontz, 1992). During the Progressive Era, the usual work week was five and a half to six days, which was too long for a married women to also complete her household duties, even with the help of labor saving devices (Coontz, 1992). In addition, some employers flatly refused to hire married women and for those married women who were employed, expanded protective legislation put the government in the business of regulating the hours and tasks that companies could assign married women, in order to make sure that reproduction remained the woman's primary goal (Coontz, 1992). Even for married women who had the time and desire to join the workforce, many times their societal role as a mother forced them back into the home.

The Progressive Era also placed women in a role, in which, regardless of their marriage situation, women were better off staying married to their husbands because of the dependence they had them for survival. For example, most women received benefits through their husband's work and, as many discovered later, if the relationship lasted less than 20 years they ended up

with no benefits at all (Coontz, 1992). For wives who did want to leave their husbands, the social work movement was in place, which discouraged married women in the early twentieth century from leaving abusive husbands because the prevailing belief was that a wife's place was in the home. Regardless of what the situation may be between wife and husband; physical abuse, drug or alcohol addiction, neglect, or abandonment, the wife was expected to stay with her husband (Peden & Glahe, 1986).

For women who did leave their husbands, the government put in place a form of aid to single mothers called the mother's pension. Although this aid did exist, it was not easy for a woman to draw money from it. Mothers' pensions were made contingent on a woman's display of middle-class norms about privacy and domesticity such as no male boarders, no working away from home more than three days a week, and no living in a morally questionable neighborhood. All of the activities banned by the government were most common among the women in need of the mothers' pension (Coontz, 1992).

As with any historical period, the Progressive Era harbored some unique aspects that really played a part in the way the family was structured and the distinct roles between men and women. For example, the Progressive Era marked the beginning of popular culture and visual media displaying gender roles, negative reactions to the elimination of child labor laws, the eugenics reaction to immigration, World War I, and the era ended with the women's suffrage movement and the fight for the female vote. All of these events had major effects on the American family and the female's role during this period.

In the Progressive Era media, popular culture began to take off and show a mostly female representation of domestic chores. Such representations prevail in all forms of women's popular media, including household handbooks, women's magazines, and advertising. Through this

prominent display of women's work in the home, advertisements played a significant role in reinforcing domestic work as the responsibility of women during the Progressive Era (Branham, 2014). An example of such advertisements is a campaign for Pearline soap from the early 1900s which claims, "What a difference in the evening when a woman has cleaned house all day with Pearline and what a difference to everyone in the house when the cleaning is done quickly and easily without any fuming or fretting! You men ought to get together and insist on Pearline!" (Branham, 2014, p. 14). This advertisement displays the labor roles of a Progressive era household in the assumption that the woman is the one to have cleaned house all day. The men's assumed role in this advertisement is to encourage the women to clean with Pearline, but not to clean house themselves. Progressive Era media also promotes the women's key role as a homemaker, which is a role that goes beyond cleaning. Again, displayed through another advertisement printed in 1917, "A house is just four walls. A home is four walls build around a mother. And the less time a mother needs to devote to house cleaning, the more time she has from homemaking (Branham, 2014, p. 4)." Here women are encouraged to save time and labor from cleaning, not to work outside the home or pursue their own interests, but to be a homemaker for their husband and children and make sure their needs are fulfilled. To be a wife in the Progressive Era meant to work to fulfill the needs of the men and children in the household. Not only was this labor presented as the definition of an American lady at the time, it was also constructed as work to be done not for pay and as an expression of love and patriotism with no help from other family members or servants. Access to and acceptability of servants diminished along with an increased expectation for cleanliness during the Progressive era (Branham, 2014).

Another element unique to the Progressive Era that had an effect on family structure was the government's enforcement of child labors laws and the public response to those laws. For the first time in history, progressives and trade unionists sought to limit women's work and to outlaw child labor. They did this by attempting to close unhealthy sweatshops (Coontz, 1992). What is unique to this era is not the outlawing of child labor, but the angry reactions to these laws by the American public. The unions and progressives were generally successful in gaining bans on child labor in Northern states, although many poor parents and businesses opposed these laws. Some of the poor and traditionalists resisted restrictions on child labor because they believed children needed work experience, not an education, and they needed help to earn money for the family (Coontz, 1992). Only during the Progressive Era have twentieth century American families ever fought for their children to work at a young age rather than attend school.

Another unique aspect of the Progressive era that had great effects on family structures was the introduction of eugenics, or the belief and practice of improving the genetic quality of the American population. Many Americans feared the possible effects of mass immigration, such as culturally different people starting families, and believed that by granting greater power to the government and encouraging the centralization of authority, notions of order, continuity, and community would be reestablished (Yamin, 2009). In response to the fear of the effects of immigration on American families, the government intervened with new marriage regulations. Many of the new marital regulations checked for the growth of so-called genetically undesirable populations, i.e. immigrants. The government passed restrictive marriage laws to radically reduce the reproduction of new generations of Americans who fell outside the idealized image of the American citizen. Marriage reformers believed that regulating marriage and controlling reproduction would promote a homogeneous citizenry, in terms of both cultural values and

biological capabilities, and serve as the foundation of a stable nation and society (Yamin, 2009). These restrictive marriage laws made it very difficult for people of different cultural backgrounds to marry during the Progressive Era, which is something less stressed in future eras of the American family.

In addition, during the Progressive Era, women often felt confined to their predisposed feminine roles and struggled to gain access to education, win the right to vote, and break down other barriers preventing them from entering the public world of work and politics. These feelings of repression are not unique to this era although the women's political advances towards equality for women are. During the Progressive Era, women started the first wave of the feminist movement, known as women' suffrage, in the year 1904. The women's suffrage movement encouraged millions of women to break free of the nuclear family mold the government attempted to force them to adhere to and instead to begin focusing on their educations, their careers, and their roles outside of the family. By 1916, the National American Woman Suffrage Association had two million members. The push for female suffrage, along with the overturning of many restrictive conventions from the Victorian days of the eighteenth century, stirred an excitement about female achievements and capabilities and through this movement, women won the right to vote in 1920 (Coontz, 2011). Unfortunately for women, with the onset of the Great Depression and the move into the next era of the family, fighting for women's rights dwindled while families instead had to fight to survive through economic struggles.

Another element unique to the Progressive Era is World War I. The effects of World War I, spanning from 1914 to 1918, also helped overthrow the nineteenth-century female "norms" causing a revolution in the manners and morals of unmarried women (McGovern, 1968). During World War I, the concept of the "new woman," also referred to as the flapper, developed. She

smoked, drank, worked, and played side by side with men (McGovern, 1968). During this time, women were going out in public alone or with members of the opposite sex and the concept of dating, or unsupervised alone time between a man and a women, became common practice (Coontz, 2011). Although there were certain advanced signals of rebellion before World War I, it was not until the war and beyond that the code of women's innocence and ignorance crumbled and the parameters of courtship before marriage were forever changed.

Starting with an influx of government control due to mass immigration to America and ending in World War I and women winning the right to vote, the Progressive Era made many impacts on American families and the female role. The era began with a governmental push to create a distinct culturally homogenous and nuclear family structure, forcing married women out of the workforce and into their homes to keep house and tend to their husband and children. The Progressive Era was unique in many ways such as through early 1900s media portraying only women working in the home, fights for the abolishing of child labor laws, through a government push for eugenics and culturally homogenous family units, World War I, and women's suffrage. The Progressive Era ended in 1929 with the onset of the Great Depression. No longer was the influx of immigrants and women's rights the biggest national issues as America was on the brink of war and family structures were taking new shapes.

Depression Families and the Female Role (1929 - 1945)

The Depression era families serve as the second notable family structure of the twentieth century, spanning from 1929 until 1945. The Depression era began abruptly with the American stock market crash in 1929 and the ensuing worldwide economic collapse and ended with the close of World War II. Within three years after the stock market crash, unemployment had tripled across North America and industrial production had fallen almost 50 percent (Coontz,

2005). In the United States, nine million families lost their savings in bank failures (Tignor, 2002). Many grown men and women lost their jobs and some in turn lost their homes. This era marks a time in which many adults experienced first-hand the constraints of economic pressure and diminished opportunities, to instability of male earnings, and the industry of the gainfully employed mother (Bennett & Elder, 1979). The Great Depression along with the onset of World War II brought a temporary shift in the family structure, changed the female role within the family, and had many elements unique to only this era of the American family.

The Depression era brought about many hard times economically, which drastically changed the structure of the family. During the 1930s, children once again had to work to help earn money for the survival of the family. Some children were abandoned and wandered looking for work. Families doubled up to save on rent, and women took in boarders, worked as servants, ran hairdressing salons, baked goods, or sewed for extra money (Coontz, 1992). Men, too, took to the roads to look for work, hoping their families would join them once they had obtained a steady paycheck. The domestic life was impossible for many, first because of economic hardship and later because of the onset of World War II. Marriage and children were delayed, and buying a home was out of the question for many families (Coontz, 1992).

The Depression era changed millions of lives dramatically, causing a major shift in the female role in the family. Both the female's home life and work life were uprooted from the nuclear units the Progressive Era attempted to establish. During the Depression, the female's unpaid workload in the home increased and many wives and mothers saw a significant increase in the amount of time they needed to devote to laundering and house cleaning, despite the fact that the most demanding aspects of these tasks were eliminated just a decade prior (Coontz, 1992). This was in part because many families were less able to afford the conveniences that had

begun to lighten the homemaker's load during the Progressive Era and many women had to again learn to sew their own clothes, can more of their own preserves, and do more cooking from scratch (Coontz, 2005). Shopping too became a time consuming task as women needed to constantly monitor how much money they spent. One woman recollected that she and her neighbor made sure to shop together. "You could get two pounds of hamburger for a quarter, so we would buy two pounds and split it," she explained; "One week she would pay the extra penny and the next week I would pay" (Westin, 1976, p. 27). The deprived households in the 1930s forced women into old domestic ways through increasing their household responsibilities, in turn for a less expensive lifestyle (Bennett & Elder, 1974).

The role of married women in the family structure also changed in the realm of employment. During the Depression era there were three distinct phases of married woman's employment; employment before World War II, employment during the war, and employment after the war. Before World War II, the Great Depression accelerated an influx of married women into the workforce to help counteract many husbands' loss of employment. In 1900, less than six percent of married women worked outside the home. By the mid-1930s more that 15% of wives were recorded as employed, and many thousands held jobs off the books (Ware, 1982). Unlike the earlier Progressive Era, almost no women viewed their work as liberating during the Depression era. Few women held prestigious or well paid jobs, as most were employed as clerks, laundresses or in low-skill assembly jobs and public acceptance of such employment plummeted (Coontz, 2005). Many people believed such families were double-dipping into an a workforce with very limited positions open and although the married woman's employment was crucial for some families to survive, many business did not like their presence. The U.S. Economy Act of 1932 prohibited the federal government form employing two people from the same family and

although the act's language was gender-neutral, nearly all 1,500 people fired in its first year were women (Coontz, 2005). Other federal laws and business policies discouraged hiring of married women and mandated they be first fired in cutbacks; 26 states passed laws prohibiting their employment pushing them back into the home and causing their families to suffer financially (Coontz, 1992).

World War II introduced new elements into the discussion of women's place in the public sphere (Coontz, 2011). The United States entered the war in December 1941 and many men were called to fulfill their patriotic duties, as they were needed in battle, causing even more job opportunities to open up for women. Many more wives decided that improving their cooking was less urgent than contributing something more tangible to the war effort and many businesses accepted that they needed female help. Married women poured into the workforce during World War II, on a much more financially rewarding and culturally approving basis than before the war (Coontz, 2005). Before the war's end in August 1945, the female labor force increased by almost 60 percent, with married women making up three-fourths of those newly entering the workforce (Hartmann, 1982). As part of the war effort, women worked in jobs that had previously been unthinkable for their sex, such as pipefitters, mechanics, welders, carpenters, and ship fitters (Coontz, 2005). Not only did these married women perform "men's jobs," but they also earned "men's wages." In contrast with the pre-war years of the Depression era, the government actually encouraged married women to work through the duration of the war. Public service ads warned that soldiers would die unless women took over the production lines that the men had left behind (Coontz, 2005). One famous example of such advertisements is "Rosie the Riveter" whose image and slogan encouraged women to work in order to protect their men away at war.

After the close of World War II in 1945, the married women's role and the public perception of being in the workforce changed again. A combination of factors led married women to temporarily pull back from full-time employment or at least to downgrade its centrality in their lives, including many veterans returning home and in need of their pervious employment and a renewed enthusiasm to return to the nuclear family structures present before the Depression era.

Many women came to enjoy the work they did during the wartime emergency, as well as its economic benefits, and wanted to remain in their jobs after the war, but also felt veterans should be given their jobs back (Coontz, 2005). Either women would resign from their employment posts or employers made sure married women were first to go in cutbacks. Women were ushered out of the labor force in the masses between 1945 and 1947 (Coontz, 2005). Many women felt a sense of loss. A formerly employed wife wrote in the April 1945 issue of the *Canadian Home Journal* that sending women back into the home was "like putting a chick back in the shell—it cannot be done without destroying the spirit, heart or mind (Pierson, 1986, p. 216). World War II left a much more positive image of working women and for years afterward women spoke nostalgically about their wartime work experiences, but at the end of the war women were also enthusiastic about returning to marriage and female homemaking (Coontz, 2005).

Through the economically hard times, the influx of married female employment, and the men away at war, the Depression era developed some unique aspects that are not seen in any other era of the American family. Only during this era did public reactions to married women's employment change so frequently and so much and only during this era did children ever look down upon their mothers for their gains in employment.

One unique aspect of the Depression era that greatly affected the family structures was the inconsistent public perception of women in the workforce. Towards the start of the Great Depression, Americans were in a state of economic crisis and women felt the need to work to help support their families. Often times married women did not feel welcome in the workforce and felt backlash from the public for their decision to work. At the start of World War II, only a few short years later, the public desperately needed women in the workforce when all the men headed overseas to fight. Married women were idolized for taking the positions men once filled as they helped win the war from the home front. By the close of World War II, women once again left the workforce to return to the home, with the public perceptions that they positions they filled during the war must be rightfully returned to the men. During just this 15 to 20 year period, the public changed their perception of married women in the workforce three times, making it very difficult for women to understand and define their roles and balances between work and family during the Depression era.

In addition, uniquely during the Depression era, women often felt forced work outside of the home to contribute to family income in order for the family to survive. When women had to seek work because her husband lost his job or could not provide enough for his family, this threatened the "modern" ideas of masculinity and marriage that most men had come to embrace over the previous two decades. Unemployed men often lost their sense of identity and became demoralized with many turning to drinking and short tempers at home (Coontz, 2005). Children raised in the Depression era associated a working mother with high levels of family tension and with the father's failure rather than their mother's successes (Elder, 1974). The Great Depression undercut the societal and familial support for working women that had emerged earlier in the twentieth century. By associating women's work with men's economic failure, the Great

Depression had reinforced the appeal of the male breadwinner family seen in the Progressive Era.

The Depression era saw many changes within the family structure and the female role within that structure. Beginning with the stock market crash, all members of the family, men, women, and children, were forced into the workplace and women forced to be extra sparing at home as families scraped to survive. The female role in the family changed from homemaker to a partner in the workforce, requiring many women to contribute earnings for the family to survive. The country showed varying degrees of acceptance to married women's work, but by the wartime were appreciative of their contributions. The Depression era was unique in that women's roles changed by the year and children did not know how to respond to their mothers' work outside their home and their fathers' unemployment and felt these elements negatively affected the family life. With World War II won, the men back in their old employment posts, and the wives and mothers back at home, the family structure again looked more like the nuclear model and American families moved into the next era; traditional families.

"Traditional" Era Families and the Female Role (1945- mid-1960s)

The "Traditional" era is the third notable era of the American family structure during the twentieth century, spanning from the end of World War II in 1945 until the mid-1960s. Traditional is in quotes to emphasize that there is nothing truly traditional about this era. The Traditional era began with the end of World War II, a time when men returned to the workforce and women returned to the home. During the war, thousands of women had entered new jobs, gained new skills, joined unions, and fought against job discrimination only to retreat to housewifery after the war. Women were told that no other experience in life would provide the same sense of fulfillment, of happiness, of complete pervading contentment as motherhood, a

concept that most women of the era did not agree with (Coontz, 1992). The era ended with the start of the Women's Liberation Movement and the fight for equal rights between genders and the dismantling of gender roles within the home and workforce. The Traditional era brought on a new family structure unique to the time causing a shift in the female role within the family and harbored many unique elements to this era of the American family.

The Traditional era once again saw a push towards a nuclear family structure featuring a husband, his wife, and their dependent children. The cultural consensus that everyone should marry and form a male breadwinner family was like a steamroller that crushed every alternative view (Coontz, 2005). By the middle of the Traditional era, even people who had grown up in a completely different family system had come to universally believe that marriage at a young age into a male wage-earner and the childrearing, home-managing housewife was the traditional and permanent family form (Coontz, 2005).

Unlike the Progressive Era, this nuclear family structure did not occur due to government control and laws, but because of government gifts and freedom. After World War II, the temporary prosperity of the American government allowed for higher working wages, educational benefits such as the GI Bill, and housing loans and acceptance of domesticity became the mark of middle-class status and upward mobility (Coontz, 1992). Not only was the 1950s family a new invention to this era, it was also a historical fluke based on a unique and temporarily flourishing conjecture of economic, social, and political factors within the government (Coontz, 1992). The government allowances allowed middle-class Americans to adopt family values and caused pressure for early marriage, early childbearing, home buying and the expansion of consumer debt, all of which would become problematic towards the end of the Traditional era.

The government allowances allowed families to return to its nuclear form on the foundation of false happiness. Marriage and family life was seen as the only culturally acceptable route to adulthood and independence, forcing men and women to marry prematurely and fall into gender roles often leading to unhappiness. A 1957 survey in the United States reported that four out of five people believed that anyone who preferred to remain single was "sick," "neurotic," or "immoral," and even more agreed that once married, the husband should be a breadwinner and the wife should stay home (Coontz, 2005). Societal beliefs such as these made men as well as women feel pressured into these constructed family roles.

For men, the lack of a suitable wife could mean the loss of a job or promotion for a middle-class man (Coontz, 1992). In addition, men often felt confronted by contradictions. Men were encouraged to provide for families by participating in paid work in the public sphere and consequently were absent from the home for the majority of the day. Simultaneously, they felt pressure to establish a palpable presence in the home by providing a masculine role model for children by embracing the ideology of togetherness (Choi, 2014). During this time period, some men and women entered into loveless marriages in order to forestall attacks about real or suspected homosexuality or lesbianism or to accelerate their success in the workforce (Coontz, 1992). Growing up in a Traditional era family was not so much a matter of protection of a loving nuclear family unit from the harsh realities of the outside world as it was preventing the outside world from learning the harsh realities of family life (Coontz, 1992).

During the Traditional era of the family, women took on a very thankless role within in the family structure involving stay at home motherhood, an increase in housework, and a constant pressure to please their husbands and children. After World War II, families became the forefront of American life. Companies ushered women out of the labor force in the masses

allowing women to return to homemaking and to fulfill the needs of their husbands and children. During the 1950s, even women who had once been political activists and shipyard workers during World War II threw themselves into homemaking. Women were assured they would find ultimate fulfillment in the home as females. This evolving sentiment maintained that women, regardless of educational levels, should celebrate their femininity by putting careers aside to focus on being wives and mothers (Humphreys, 2014). Women's hunger for marriage and domesticity during the 1950s was shaped by their huge relief that two decades of depression and war were finally over (Coontz, 2005). The onset of the first real mass consumer economy in history is what made countrywide stay-at-home motherhood possible. The number of Americans with discretionary income, money left over after basic bills were paid, doubled during the 1950s resulting in nearly two-thirds of families owning their home, 87% owning televisions, and 75% of families owning cars (Hurley, 2001). At the start of the Traditional era of families, women were happy to be homemakers.

Along with homemaking comes housework. Nineteenth century middle-class women cheerfully left housework to servants, yet 1950s women of all classes created extra housework in their homes and felt guilty when they did not do everything for themselves (Coontz, 1992). During the Traditional era, further advances in domestic technologies dramatically altered the nature of housework for the majority of American women. Although electrical home appliances existed before World War II, they became widespread when economic prosperity after the war led to increased home ownership (Krafft, 2014). Despite the advent of convenience foods and new, labor saving appliances, the amount of time women spent doing housework in the 1950s actually increased (Coontz, 1992). In *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave (1983),* Ruth Schwartz Cowan observed

that appliances not only created new needs but also eliminated the chores that men and children used to do, leaving more housework and less help for the mother (Krafft, 2014). While it seems that the rise of appliances would simplify housework, domestic technologies imposed new drudgery, raising standards of cleanliness so that a housewife, rather than doing laundry once a week, for example, would instead run her washing machine and dryer every day (Krafft, 2014). Women spent extra time cleaning to make sure her home, husband, and children were clean enough and happy enough to meet the highest standards.

Traditional era wives not only kept house to the highest of standards, but also did so while simultaneously making sure to always please their husbands. During the 1950s and 1960s, many states had "head and master" laws, affirming that the wife was subject to her husband legally allowing husbands to control their wives and even ban them from education and work (Coontz, 2011). In fact, the law did not even recognize that a husband could rape his wife and in some states this law remained in effect until 1993 (Coontz, 2011). With a lack of legal rights, women felt pressure to please their husbands to maintain a peaceful relationship. Not only was it legally benefiting for a woman to please her husband, but also it was a societal expectation that meeting a man's expectations was a wife's main purpose. The dominant gender discourse of the era distinguishing women as homemakers and men as breadwinners encouraged women to believe they would be happiest serving their husbands at home (Coontz, 2005). An article in the January 1960 *McCall's*, entitled "Look Before you Leap," presented a list of questions for prospective brides to answer before they married. Some of the questions stated, "Has he pointed out things about you that he does not like about you? Have you changed because of what he said" (Coontz, 2011, p. 15)? The correct answer of course was yes, but women's magazines were unanimous in warning women against pointing out anything they did not like in their mates

(Coontz, 2011). It became a women's job to tend to their husbands and once a mother, they were warned not to be "too much mother and not enough wife (Coontz, 1992)."

The Traditional era mothers' step back from the workforce and retreat into housewifery was in many cases not freely chosen. By 1960, almost every major news journal was using the work *trapped* to describe the feelings of the American housewife (Coontz, 1992). Beneath the daily routines and surface contentment of most housewives lived a deep well of insecurity, self-doubt, and unhappiness that they could not articulate even to themselves. This unhappiness was something more than an individual case of "the blues" (Friedan, 1963). While many housewives struggled with depression, researchers attempted to explain the phenomenon, but they never questioned the idea that all life's meaning is found in the role of wife and mother. Rather, they sought to identity what had led women to wrongly devalue these roles. Many blamed higher education for distracting women with lofty academic studies they would never use instead of properly preparing them for marriage and motherhood (Coontz, 1992).

The Traditional era was a unique moment in the history of the family. Many changes occurred in family life caused by a newly flourishing American economy, an influx in the birthrate, and the onset of feminism and the Women's Liberation Movement. With the end of World War II, the American economy was better than ever. By the mid-1950s, nearly 60% of the population had middle-class income levels, compared with only 31% in the "prosperous twenties" (Coontz, 2005). With an increase in financial freedom unique to this era, other freedoms developed. Never had so many couples shared the experience of courting their own mates, getting married at will, and setting up their own households. Never had married couples been so independent of extended family ties and community groups and never before had so many people agreed to only one kind of family as "normal" (Coontz, 2005).

In addition, unique to the Traditional era of the family, was the baby boom. The baby boom is generally viewed as a period of increase birthrates in the developed countries of the world, especially most of those participating in World War II, that occurred between the mid to late 1940s and the late 1960s (Bavel & Reher, 2013). The dynamics of reproduction changed during this period, with marriage rates accelerating, total fertility rising, and the number of births increasing substantially. The baby boom interrupted the decades-long decline of birth rates dating back to the nineteenth century. Then, from the 1960s onward, the decline resumed (Bavel & Reher, 2013). Researchers describe the baby boom as a "birth quake" with many aftershocks. It was a totally unexpected, earth-shattering, and ground-breaking event experienced not just in the United States, but in virtually the entire western industrialized world during the 1950s and 1960s, as birth rates erupted and the number of babies born annually in many countries nearly doubled within just a few years (Macunovich, 2002). The baby boom, in turn affected the structure of the Traditional era family. With more children to tend to, many wives felt more justified in leaving their jobs for stay at home motherhood.

Tending to housework and the multitude of children was not as rewarding as Traditional era women would have imagined leading, to a sense of guilt, depression, and hopelessness many housewives felt, but attempted to hide. Unique to this era was the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan in 1963, which was a product of the 1950s discontented responses received from a survey of American housewives (Coontz, 2011). In the book, Friedan described what she called the widespread boredom and restlessness housewives were experiencing in the 1950s and 1960s as the "problem with no name" (Friedan, 1963.) Many of these white middle-class housewives had been educated alongside the men but had given up their professional dreams for the promise of ultimate feminine fulfillment. Women believed in the promise and

found themselves bewildered by the actual boredom of homemaking (Humphreys, 2014). With the publishing of *The Feminine Mystique,* Friedan unleashed a wave of recognition and relief in thousands of women (Coontz, 2011). The book is credited, or blamed, for destroying single-handedly and almost overnight the 1950s consensus that women's place was in the home. The book ignited the Women's Liberation Movement, launched a social revolution, and transformed the social fabric of the United States (Coontz, 2011).

There is nothing truly "traditional" about the Traditional era family. Beginning with the end of World War II, governmental freedoms allowed many families more luxuries such as marriage and purchasing homes at a younger age. The American economy flourished allowing men to work and women to remain home to tend to the house and children, while remaining financially stable. As homemakers, the female role was to make sure to complete housework to the highest of standards and take are of their husbands and children. Although welcomed at first, women began to resent their time in the home. The publication of *The Feminine Mystique* sparked many women's interest, showing them that they were not alone in feeling depressed and limited as homemakers and women began to fight back. The Traditional Family era ended and the next era of the family began with the rising popularity and force of the Women's Liberation Movement, also known as the feminist movement, in which women became more vocal and strived for equality among the sexes.

Modern Era Families and the Female Role (mid-1960s-1990s)

The fourth and final era of the twentieth century family structures is Modern era families. This era began with the Women's Liberation Movement and the fight for equality between the sexes, a fight that continues into the twenty-first century. During the previous eras, the world of American women was limited in almost every respect, from family life to the workplace.

Societal pressures forced women to follow one path: to marry, start a family, and dedicate her life to homemaking. After the publication of *The Feminine Mystique,* women began to fight back against the inequalities between men and women (Sink, 2008). The Women's Liberation Movement gained momentum when Betty Friedan and twenty-eight women founded the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966. The purpose of the organization was to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all privileges and responsibilities thereof in true equal partnership with men (Sink, 2008).

The Women's Liberation Movement originally focused on dismantling workplace inequality allowing women to leave their homes and enter the workforce by ending the denial of access to better jobs and salary inequity, via anti-discrimination laws (Sink, 2008). Eventually, the more radical members of the Women's Liberation Movement were determined to completely overthrow the patriarchy that they believed was oppressing every facet of women's lives, including their private lives (Collins, 2009). They popularized the idea that "the personal is political" and that women's political inequality had equally important personal ramifications, encompassing their relationships, sexuality, birth control and abortion, clothing and body image, and roles in marriage, housework and childcare (Collins, 2009). By the end of 1979, the National Organization for Women exceeded 100,000 members. In 2008, NOW has 500,000 members and 550 chapters in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The organization is still fighting for the rights of women and ensuring that the organization stays true to the ideals of its founding members (Sink, 2008). Through the efforts of women during the Women's Liberation Movement, the Modern era family structure took shape, the female role within the family shifted, and many unique aspects of the era developed.

The Modern era family and the push for female equality brought about a massive shift in the structure of the family. There is no longer one set structure that constitutes a family and families now take a variety of forms including cohabitation between unmarried people, children born out of wedlock, gay marriage, divorce, and single parents. In fact, the so-called "traditional families" made up of two parents plus dependent children now constitute only a quarter of all American households as of the turn to the twenty-first century (Maushart, 2001). There is an increasing diversity of family types in America, and most American families move in and out of a variety of types over the course of their lives (Coontz, 1992).

The victories of the Women's Liberation Movement attribute to some of the changes in female role within the family structure. For example, the fight for equal employment opportunities and pay allows women to raise a family without a financial dependence on men and the fight for sexual freedom and birth control allows a women to choose when and with whom she would like to reproduce regardless of her marital status. Through these victories, changes followed in the American family structure. Marriage is no longer viewed as the transition into adulthood, but rather an established form of employment and self produced financial security are the markers of growing up. The average age for marriage has risen by six years since 1950. More than three-quarters of Modern era 18 to 24 year-olds have never married, and the majority of young adults leave their parental homes and establish themselves in jobs well before marriage (Coontz, 1992). Marriage is also less likely to last until death. About 50% of all first marriages and 60% of all second marriages end in divorce (Coontz, 1992). With less financial dependency and fair laws between the rights of men and women, women no longer need to stay in unstable marriages.

Not only has the female role within marriage taken a new form, but childbirth as well. Between the years 1971 to 1979, the percentage of women aged 15 to 19 who had sexual intercourse at least once before marriage increased one-third. By the mid-1980s, 75% of American women were sexually active before marriage, drastically increasing the amount of single mother's in the United States (Coontz, 1992). In addition, childbearing is no longer tightly linked to marriage and in 1990 a quarter of new births were out of wedlock (Coontz, 1992). As the number of births outside of marriage rises, the stigma previously attached to children born out of wedlock is fading.

Modern era women are involved in the workforce and in the home and their roles change depending on the current structure of the family. This makes it difficult to generalize the women's involvement in the family into one distinct role during this era. To analyze the female role in the family, it is beneficial to look at each family structure including dual income families, single parent families, and cohabitating families separately.

For Modern era families, marital status has almost no effect at all on women's labor-force participation and many families are dual income families. According to 1998 figures, 50% of all American women in the prime working ages of 24 through 54 were employed full-time and year-round. Among married women in this age category, the figure was 46%, only four percentage points lowers (Maushart, 2001). The Women's Liberation Movement at the start of this era made women having places in the workforce possible. The legitimacy of women's rights is so widely accepted during the Modern era that only a tiny minority of Americans seriously propose that women should go back to being full-time housewives or should be denied educational and job opportunities because of their family responsibilities (Coontz, 1992).

Although many married women work outside of the home, past gender roles still place expectations on women to perform as the main homemaker in the home. After working outside the home for pay, people still need to return home to complete household tasks, known as the second shift. This shift includes a wide variety of work from childcare, to laundry, to repairing home appliances. Arlie Hochschild, a researcher on the notion of the second shift, found that women completed "jobs that fix them into a rigid routine," multitask jobs, and often forgot leisurely activities to complete maintenance. Men, on the other hand, might or might not help with the second shift, and often when they do, they have "more control over when they make their contributions than women do" (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). The statistical proof of this is overwhelming. In an extensive review of the literature, the difference between the domestic workload of husbands with employed wives and husbands with unemployed wives was found to be exactly ten minutes a day (Maushart, 2001). Husbands of unemployed wives were doing about 33% of what their wives did around the house; husbands of employed wives about 37% (Sweeney, 1999). Although around half of married couples in the Modern era of families are dual income households, women still complete two-thirds of all household work.

Another common structure of Modern era families is the single parent household. A single parent household forms in a variety of ways including death of a spouse, divorce or children born out of wedlock and is an increasingly common family structure. This family structure is more common because marriage has become an option rather than a necessity for men and women, even during the child-raising years and in some instances, singlehood is not a choice. In the 1990s, one in four children live in a single-family home (Coontz, 1997). The number of single parents increased from 3.8 million in 1970 to 6.9 million in 1980, a rate that averages out to an unprecedented six percent increase each year (Coontz, 1997). The total

numbers have continued to mount, reaching 12.2 million single parent households by 1996 (Coontz, 1992).

A mother-headed single-family household alters the female's role in the family. In this family structure, women are the breadwinner and the homemaker on their own. For divorce in particular, divorce tends to disadvantage women economically more so than men making economic stability sometimes difficult, but adversely a 1982 survey found that even one year after a divorce, regardless of economic struggle, a majority of women said they were happier and had more self-respect than they had in their marriages (Coontz, 1992).

Divorce is hardest of all on women who committed themselves to the 1950s marriage ideal, forgoing personal economic and educational advancement in order to raise a family, and expecting a lifetime of financial support from a husband in return (Coontz, 1997). These women find themselves unemployed and still dependent upon government-forced monetary support from their ex-husbands, many falling below the poverty line. In addition, for divorced mother's who do maintain employment, the single income to support the household and provide childcare becomes an economic strain. Regardless of the woman's employment circumstances, divorce places many women in a time of economic hardship. There is speculation as to why divorce rates are increasing at such a rate and although very few researchers believe that women's employment had been a direct cause of the rising divorce rate, most agree that women's employment made it easier for couples to separate if they were dissatisfied for other reasons (Coontz, 1992).

The growth of unwed motherhood as the cause for single parent households is also becoming increasingly common. Non-marital childbearing occurred at a rate of 7.1 births per 1,000 in 1940 to 45.2 births per 1,000 in 1992 (Coontz, 1997). The popular perception is that the

Women's Liberation Movement's fight for freedom of female sexuality started the rise in unwed childbearing, but it is important to realize the changing economic relations between men and women during this period as well (Coontz, 1997). During the Modern era, women are more gainfully employed and able to support children without dependence on a husband for financial support. Like single-families households caused by divorce or death of a spouse, unwed motherhood is financially taxing, but made possible by increased and more equal employment opportunities for women.

Cohabitation, or when two unmarried people live together in an emotionally or sexually intimate relationship on a long-term basis, is another common family structure during the Modern era. The female role in a cohabitating family structure again varies from other family types seen during this era. Many dimensions of the Women's Liberation Movement were important in the growth of cohabitation and the perceived benefits for women (Pleck, 2012). For heterosexual women, the birth control pill and the legalization of abortion contributed to the decoupling of sex and marriage (Pleck, 2012). Specifically, the availability of the birth control pill increased the certainty that a woman could have sex without becoming pregnant, thus making a long-term sexual relationship less risky. In addition, as women became more permanent wage earners, marriage became less of an economic necessity for women and they often postponed marriage for education (Pleck, 2012).

Originally, couples believed that cohabitation was fairer for women since a boyfriend living with his girlfriend did not think of himself as a family provider, and the girlfriend did not see herself as a housewife (Pleck, 2012). Cohabitation, it was thought, represented the chance to fashion egalitarian gender roles and divide chores fairly, not based on gender. By 1978, two separate surveys of college students reported that few students had achieved their ideals.

Girlfriends were doing the cooking, cleaning, and grocery shopping, and their boyfriends were working on the car and taking out the garbage (Pleck, 2012). Married or cohabitating, the gender roles associated with marriage persist in most live-in relationships between male and female.

The Modern era of families was and still is a unique era in the history of family life. The Women's Liberation Movement and the fight for gender equality changed the fabric of the American family, providing women with many more options rather than one distinct role in the family. During this era, women have new reasons to marry, researchers begin to analyze the effects of marital choices on children, and there is a misconception that these family structures are new in America.

The Modern era is the first time in history of human civilization in which marriage and family life is pursed not out of need, but out of want (Maushart, 2001). Through most of history, marriage was not primarily about the needs and desire of a man and women and they children they produced. Marriage had as much to do with getting good in-laws and increasing one's family labor force as it did with finding a lifetime companion and raising a beloved child (Coontz, 2005). In past marriages, the union was about accumulating resources and becoming economically stable and love if the couple was lucky. In the Modern era, many couples now enter into a love-based marriage system in which the past approach to marriage is reversed; men and women marry for what they perceive as love and then accumulate resources and become economically stable if they are lucky. In fact, few middle-class women enter marriage expecting to be supported for life by their husbands, but rather because they plan to maintain their adore for each other until death do them part (Maushart, 2001). This is not to suggest that financial considerations now play no part in spouse selection as research does suggest that women tend to "marry up" and often choose mates that are slightly taller, better educated, and slightly richer,

but most women no longer marry because they are financial dependent upon a man (Maushart, 2001).

Another major concern unique to the Modern era family is the impact on children of divorce and residence in single parent homes. Psychologists Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee touched a nerve in America with their 1989 study claiming almost half the children of divorced parents experience long-term pain, worry, and insecurity that adversely affect their love and work relationships (Wallerstein & Blackeslee, 1989). There are several problems with the generalizations that these researchers, among others, have drawn. Wallerstien and Blackselee's study, for example, did not compare the children of divorced couples of those with non-divorced ones to determine whether some of their worries or adjustment problems might have stemmed from other factors (Coontz, 1992). Studies such as these generalize and imply often times untrue messages that single parents have inevitably handicapped their children and upon considering a divorce, no matter how unhappy the marriage, for the sake of the child one should reconsider (Coontz, 1992). In some instances, divorce leads to a happier and more peaceful home for the children. Given that single parenthood is likely here to stay, a more productive research issue might be to move away from which aspects of single parent families produce negative outcomes and instead determine which are associated with positive outcomes (Coontz, 1992).

A final unique element of the Modern era of families is the misconception that co-provider families are a new invention in human history. In fact, today's dual-earner family represents a return to older norms, after a very short interlude that people mistakenly identify as "traditional" just one era earlier (Coontz, 1997). Throughout most of humanity's history, women as well as men were family breadwinners. In the distant past of early hunting and gathering societies women contributed as much or more to family subsistence as men. Mothers left the

hearth to forage for food, hunt small animals, trade with other groups, or tend crops (Coontz, 1997). Dual income families are not a new invention, but a return to historical familial roots.

As we enter into the twenty-first century, America is still in the stage of the Modern era family. Beginning with the Women's Liberation Movement, women fought and earned more equality in the home and in the workplace, but the fight is not over. Along with some of the female victories came a change in the family structure. In the Modern era of families, no one structure is present, but instead a combination of male breadwinner and female homemaker families, dual income families, single parent households, and cohabitating families. Many women move in and out of a variety of family structures throughout a lifetime, their role in the family changing depending on their current structure. Unique to this era are women marrying for reasons other than economic support, research suggesting single parent households are harmful, and the misconception that dual income families are new in America. Although much progress has been made in the Modern era in terms of gender equality, there are still inequalities between men and women to be solved.

Twentieth Century Higher Education: The Female Role and the Effects on Family Structure

Throughout the twentieth century, women made many gains towards equality to men in their roles within the family structure, but that is not the only area in which improvements in equally are present. Starting from a past that excluded women from higher education entirely to a present-time when the majority of degrees are awarded to women, throughout the four eras of the twentieth century, women have been making an impact in institutions of higher education.

Harvard University, the first institution of higher education in the United States, opened in 1636 to men only, excluding women from access to higher education. It was not until 229

years later, when Vassar College opened its doors and signaled a new era for American women in 1865. Although not the first-ever female college, Vassar was the first to offer a full liberal arts curriculum to female students comparable to that of men's. Still, plentiful differences between male and female higher education caused a lack in equality (Horowitz, 1984). By the twentieth century, the United States had made great strides to bridge the gap between the sexes and bring equality in terms of their access to education, as indicated by the increase in popularity of the coeducational model allowing both men and women to attend the same university and to take classes together. Although access to education for women had increased, the content and experiences in which education consisted of still differed greatly between the sexes during the twentieth century.

With a pervasive increase in coeducational institutions during the twentieth century, both men and women were able to receive higher education, but a feeling of double standards and inequality was still present. Double standards are rules or principles that unfairly apply in different ways to different people or groups. Although both sexes could now attend the same university, the institutions tailored the educational experiences depending upon students' gender and thus continuing to create a divide between men and women. Double standards between men and women existed in almost every facet of college life such as classes, curfews, freedoms of sexual expression, and even life post-graduation.

Throughout the second half of this paper, I will examine a woman's role in higher education throughout the four eras of the American family and how their place in higher education affected the female role in the family and society. To begin this analysis, Table 2 on the next page again displays the four eras of the American family. The chart summarizes the role women play within higher education and how female higher education affected family structure.

Table 2
Female Role in Higher Education during the Twentieth Century

Era of Higher Education	Female Role in Higher Education	How Female Higher Education Affects Family Structure
Progressive Era Education (1900s-1929)	- Some legislators pushed to train women to be teachers - Some legislators pushed to train women to be better wives - Home economics discipline was developed and the primary degree awarded to women - Colleges controlled female student behavior through *in loco parentis* and parietal rules - Freud announced that women have active sex drives	- Female college alumnae did not marry at the rate of their non-college sisters - Many college women explicitly chose to have a career over a family - Some critics felt female higher education was race suicide because college graduates tend to produce less children
Depression Era Education (1929-1945)	- The growth of enrollment of women in higher education briefly dipped during the height of the Great Depression, but then grew exponentially - School was a good alternative to the limited amount of jobs available - Women proved they could intellectually handle higher education and remain feminine - Home economics remained popular	- There remained a common belief that the end goal of higher education for women was to become a better mother and wife - College educated women risked marriage and "happiness" because men wanted uneducated wives - Some women blamed college for their single state
"Traditional" Era Education (1945-Mid-1960s)	- Continued institutional control over female students including curfews, dress codes, and sexual limitations while institutions remained lax with the men - Sexual revolution was beginning and institutions prevent female students from obtaining the birth control pill - Female students found ways to sneak around institutional rules	- Females graduates' decision between finding a career or a husband, but not both, intensified - Societal pressure that marriage took precedence over a career - Men looked for wives with less education - Many careers for women had large carry over values to the home
Modern Era Education (Mid-1960s-1990s)	- Idea that a college education unfit a women for the home dissipated - Women can be "womanly" and educated - Homemaking is not the sole purpose of a woman - Barriers to admissions to institutions came down and many all-male colleges began accepting women - Women enrolled in courses of study besides home economics and shared classrooms with men - Women's centers and women's studies classes appeared on college campuses	- Societal shift in attitude that women's talents can and should go beyond homemaking - Societal shift in attitude that women can and should have careers in fields more traditionally male-dominated fields - The increase in female labor force participation leads to more varied family structures such as dual income families and single parent households

Table 2: The four eras of the American family and the role of women's higher education and how their higher education affected family life during each era.

Women's Higher Education during the Progressive Era (1900s-1929)

Attention to gender was a central feature of Progressive Era reforms in the United States, particularly educational reforms in individual states. In an era of dislocation and change, Americans saw school gender practices both as a source of trouble and as an arena for reform and social restoration (Hansot & Tyack, 1988). Efforts to exclude women from various occupations and forms of schooling competed with efforts to expand women's access; these together shaped a complex mixture of obstacles and opportunities, boom and backlash, particularly for college-age women during the Progressive era (Hansot & Tyack, 1988). Some legislators fought for women to become teachers, while others fought for housewives. While the contents of their education was debated, science began explore female sexuality and dictate female students lives in other ways. It was difficult for women to fall into one distinct role with so many contrasting pressures pushing them in opposite directions.

States' legislators saw female higher education as a potential route to promoting changes in other realms. For example, with the end of child labor, American children were now able to attend kindergarten through twelfth grade school full-time, although there was still no law in place requiring school aged children to attend class. In 1902, the Florida Superintendent of Public Instruction, lamenting the lack of a compulsory school attendance law, estimated that fewer than 54,000 of Florida's 166,000 school-age children (ages six to twenty-one) had ever attended a public school (Birnbaum, 1996). Those who came to school did so only irregularly, with a national average of 70.4 days of school attendance per school year, taking both black and white students into consideration (Birnbaum, 1996). One of the greatest hindrances to educational progress during the Progressive era was the scarcity, not only of professionally trained teachers, but also of teachers of any kind (Birnbaum, 1996).

Educational leaders believed school conditions would improve and modernize if more women could be trained to work as teachers. Many educational reformers held the view that morally upright white women could serve as a kind of "object lessons" in social progress and that their very presence in school would foster "social uplift" and encourage modern values among both black and white students (Birnbaum, 1996). By 1905, a system of independent colleges, seminaries, academies, and institutes had been established to begin training female teachers (Brinbaum, 1996). These schools came to be called normal schools because their purpose was to establish teaching standards or norms, but over time, they began to be referred to simply as teaching schools.

While some legislators pushed for women's higher education to create more female teachers, other legislators pushed for women's higher education to create better wives. Denying female students a liberal arts curriculum was a common belief because of the common concern that a college education on par to that of men's somehow unfit women for household duties persisted during the Progressive Era (Peril, 2006). Mindful of the arguments that four years of college education somehow left women unfit for their duties as wives and mothers, many Progressive era colleges made sure to emphasize how an education gained at their institution benefited the femininity of their students (Peril, 2006). Even Charles Elliot, president of Harvard University from 1869 through 1909, was quoted as stating "women's colleges should become schools of manners, especially necessary because women must rely on their biologically innate 'delicate qualities, and should cease to imitate the colleges of men (Horowitz, 2004, p. 207).

To counteract this concern, colleges created a new academic discipline that suggested perhaps cooking skills and college study were not mutually exclusive. What became known as the American Home Economics discipline, developed in 1909, taught women the domestic

science needed to effectively run a household (Peril, 2006). In fact, women's initial entrance into higher education was primarily through the home economics discipline (Vincenti, 2011). Students of the domestic home economy courses could take classes in laundering, as well as chamber work, table work, dishwashing, cooking, ironing, and plain sewing (Peril, 2006). Although these courses were open both to men and women, they originated as a way for females to attend college while also maintaining their ability to complete womanly duties in the home.

While legislators fought over female higher education curriculum, Progressive Era women were enjoying their time on campus. College girls fell into the niche of college life for women: the traditions of women's colleges, the pranks of college girls, the trials and joys of the freshman year, athletics, dramatics, and club life (Halsted, 1902). Through these activities, intense relationships formed among the female students and the relationships began to be referred to as smashes. The definition of the term "smash" in general use in the early twentieth century is described as when a girl takes a shine to another and she straightaway enters upon a course of bouquet sending, interspersed with notes, mysterious packages, locks of hair perhaps, and many other tender tokens, until at last the two become inseparable (Sahli, 1979). Women also began developing intimate relationships with men before marriage.

To prevent relationships of this nature, colleges enacted harsh rules against women. Campuses showed a lack of concern over the governing of their male students and the rules were of course stricter for women than for men. The author of *The College Girl in America,* a 1905 review of both women's and coed campuses, noted that one of the first questions asked about student life at any institution was "How are the young women governed?" The answer to that, for many universities, was through the procedures related to *in loco parentis*, or, literally, the right of the university to act in place of parents (Bailey, 2002). With *in loco parentis,* universities

developed a plethora of rules, regulations, and chaperonage such as lights-out, curfews knows at parietal rules, and room inspections for female students to which the male students were not also subjected (Peril, 2006).

While colleges everywhere banned women from developing intimate relationships with men and other women, sophisticated Americans learned that women had active sexual natures, not latent ones (Robinson, 1976). The increased desire for female sexual freedom accelerated in the 1910s due to more widely available birth control and the increased social acceptability of sex. Birth control decreased the risks of sexual experimentation, and Freud's newly popular theories about human sexuality shifted the focus of sexual intimacy from procreation to recreation. By the 1920s, men *and* women explored sexual pleasure before marriage with little social sanction from their peers, although the universities still found the act unacceptable, especially by female students (Lowe, 2003). With the student desire for sexual freedom on the rise, coeducational institutions took great measures to monitor female students' sexual behavior. The larger rationale of parietals rules enacted on female students had to do with controlling sexual conduct. Men were not allowed in women's rooms and male visitors were received by women in downstairs lounges or "date rooms" where privacy was never ensured (Bailey, 2002).

The Progressive era was a confusing time for women in higher education, making it difficult to find their roles within the system. Legislation pushed them into teaching positions and then pulled them back out into the homes. Female students struggled to know if they should follow are career path or a family path and were encouraged not to try both. Through the discovery of female sexuality, their college experiences became limited and their desires for sexual freedom stronger. These attributes of higher education shaped a complex mixture of obstacles and opportunities for women, which had effects on the women's role in the family.

Higher education for women during the Progressive Era had certain influences on the female's role within the family. The largest influence being it was statistically proven that alumnae of the women's colleges did not marry at the rate of their non-college sisters and therefore many never entered into family life (Horowitz, 1984). In a society that forced women to make a choice between marriage and career, many college-educated women either explicitly chose careers, or in pursuing higher degrees or chosen work, cut themselves off unwittingly from opportunities to marry (Horowitz, 1984). Among the early classes at Bryn Mawr, an early women's college, 53% of graduates remained single, in contrast to only 11% of uneducated American women in the same period who did not marry (Horowitz, 1984). Critics for higher education for women warned that liberal learning threatened femininity, explaining why so many career bound women never married (Horowitz, 1984).

In the early twentieth century, this criticism against women's higher education took a specific form: the women's colleges threatened the nation with "race suicide" (Horowitz, 1984). In the years around 1915, scholars came forward armed with statistics to prove that Mount Holyoke, Wellesley, Vassar, and Bryn Mawr graduates endangered the race. For American born citizenry to survive, American women had to marry and produce three children (Sprague, 1915). In contrast, these writers informed the public that only 50% of Mount Holyoke graduates during the Progressive Era married, and those who did only averaged two children (Sprague, 1915). Scholars and scientists who made claims such as these were known as eugenicists, or people who believe in the practice of improving the genetic quality of the American population by limiting the influx of immigrants and American women bearing more children.

To these eugenicists, the women's colleges posed a dangerous barrier to the continued dominance of the American born citizens in America, for their graduates- of prime intelligence

and racial stock—did not marry or bear children in adequate proportions (Horowitz, 1984). Critics to female higher education agreed that the women's colleges needed to introduce domestic science into the curriculum to make women more appealing to men as "helpmeets and mothers of the new generation" (Sprague, 1915). The implementation of domestic science into the female college curriculum is present during the Progressive Era as well as the upcoming eras of the twentieth century.

The Progressive Era was a unique era in history for women's higher education. Women struggled know their role within educational curriculum with some legislators fighting for trained female teachers and others fighting for trained female homemakers. Many state colleges were developed to be normal, or teaching, school, while others implemented the newly created department of home economics to teach women their domestic duties within the home and this continued to be the most popular degree sought out by female students throughout the era and into future eras (Vincenti, 2011). Progressive Era colleges also controlled their female students through rules such as *in loco parentis* and parietal rules; these rules persisted into future eras of female higher education. Higher education for women during this era had effects on the female family life. Female college graduates married at a rate much lower than their non-college graduate sisters. Some critics felt that female higher education was race suicide due to college women choosing careers over children. Although many of these elements carried on into the Depression era, World War II also turned the world of female higher education upside down and it was surprisingly a time of growth for college women during a time of American recession.

Women's Higher Education during the Depression Era (1929-1945)

The Depression era is a relatively neglected period, as little scholarship focuses on higher education during the Great Depression, and still less focuses on women's education (Nash &

Romero, 2012). The research that does consider female students in the 1930s usually includes them only as a small part of a more sweeping history of higher education and the focus typically is on access rather than the content of collegiate experiences or curriculum. The absence of a robust body of scholarship on this period is striking, given that the Depression era frequently is pointed to not only as a turning point or "defining moment" in American history as a time of retrenchment for women, both in and outside of academia, following the heady gains of the 1920s (Nash & Romero, 2012).

To gain a better understanding of this period and the contemporary conversations, debates, and issues regarding women's education, historians must examine popular magazines, academic journals, and newspapers published throughout the Depression era (Nash & Romero, 2012). Major newspapers and magazines represent the spectrum of mainstream opinion, as the press needs to retain its audience by situating itself centrally within the range of public opinion (Caudill & Ashdown, 2008). Historians also examine scholarly journals, thus providing us with views from both inside and outside of the academy (Nash & Romero, 2012). Through these sources, a view of the female role in higher education during the Depression era develops.

Much changed in the female role in higher education during the Depression era in terms of access. Though the growth of enrollment dipped during the height of the Depression in the early 1930s, by 1932 it quickly rebounded (Nash & Romero, 2012). Although men's participation in collegiate life expanded at a greater rate than did women's, the sheer number of women attending college also grew exponentially. In 1900, there were 85,338 female students, and by 1940, there were 600,953 (US Office of Education, 1941). Not surprisingly, given these surging enrollments, the number of bachelor's, master's, and even doctoral degrees jumped

substantially as well. Table 3 shows the number of females who earned graduate and undergraduate degrees from 1920 to 1940 (US Office of Education, 1941).

Table 3
Female College Enrollment & Degrees Earned, 1920-1940

Year	Enrollment	Bachelors	Masters	Doctorates
1920	282,942	16,642	1,294	93
1930	480,802	48,869	6,044	353
1940	600,953	76,954	10,223	429

This increased enrollment in college for women is due to, in part, the laws and regulations against married women's employment and job shortages in general during the Great Depression. For young women who could not find jobs or were banned from employment, one alternative was school. Colleges made efforts to provide scholarships and work-study programs in part to keep young people out of the labor market (Nash & Romero, 2012). Roosevelt's Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and, later, the National Youth Administration (NYA) began to provide some federal assistance to college students in 1934 (Levine, 1986). Aid to students, whether as private scholarships or federal relief, was extended to more males than females (Nash & Romero, 2012).

Unlike the Progressive Era, during the Depression era women's intellectual abilities were less debated and that women were equally capable of rigorous academic work largely was settled by this period (Nash & Romero, 2012). By the 1930s, questions about whether women were intellectually and physiologically capable of mastering a college liberal arts curriculum had been

answered (Nash & Romero, 2012).Women had proven that they could combine scholarship with femininity, holding their own among men in classrooms everywhere and retaining their rosy cheeks and feminine charm (Barnard,1937). Although science proved and the public accepted that women are intellectually capable of higher education, women still flocked to higher education to enroll mostly in home economic courses and the question of whether female higher education contributed to the common good, or whether it led to family tragedy was another matter altogether (Nash & Romero, 2012).

Higher education during the Depression era had effects on the women's role in the family. The common belief about higher education for women during the Depression era was firmly rooted in the end goal of woman becoming a wife and mother. Regardless of perspective or opinion, whether conservative or progressive, whether male or female, whether a university professor writing in an academic journal or a journalist for the popular press, all seemed to share a common belief about the proper role of women in American society: that of wife and mother (Nash & Romero, 2012). Failure to become a wife and mother meant living a tragic, wasted, or at least an unhappy life (Nash & Romero, 2012).

Numerous magazine, newspaper, and academic journal articles written during the Depression era warned that attending college could mean risking marriage and happiness for women (Nash & Romero, 2012). College educated women were said to be less likely to marry for a variety of reasons (Nash & Romero, 2012). For instance, sociologist Paul Popenoe argued that college women delayed marriage and missed the window of opportunity to find a good husband. "The delay," according to Popenoe, "often results in depriving her of any real chance of marriage. During these few years the marriageable men she once knew have been won by other girls and she is left without a husband (Popenoe, 1935, pgs. 257-257)." Since women generally

marry older men, “by the time college women decided to marry, few single men remain,” wrote Popenoe, and those that do are a sorry lot, comprised “of mental and physical defectives and homosexuals” (Popenoe, 1935, pgs. 257-258).

Aside from the problem of waiting too long, college also caused women to have unrealistic ideas and beliefs not conducive to marriage (Nash & Romero, 2012). According to a 1935 article in the *Journal of Educational Sociology*, some graduates of women’s colleges blamed their alma mater for their single state, saying that the schools “encouraged them to form segregated ideals or make unreasonable demands during the period when they should have been thinking of their need for a mate (Groves, 1935).” College “deludes” women into thinking that marriage should be between equals, wrote Walter L. Lowe in *The Chicago Defender*, while men “hold that it is an inalienable right of all husbands to be lord and master of their respective homes” (Lowe, 1935, p. 11). With educated women who want to be treated as equals and men who wanted to be treated as masters, many educated women entered into unhappy marriages.

To conclude, the Depression era brought many changes in the realm of women’s higher education. Women entered college in the masses due to shortages in employment, laws against female labor, and increases in federal financial aid towards school tuition. As women’s access to higher education increased, public attitudes toward educated women had varying reactions. While the public perception that a liberal arts higher education evaded a woman’s femininity was replaced by the understanding that a woman could be educated and feminine, the common perception that a female’s purpose was to be a wife and mother first still remained. In essence, while earlier claims that women were not physiologically suited for higher education may have become obsolete, they gave way to new claims of the dangers of unhappiness and maladjustment

for individual women (Nash & Romero, 2012). More changes were on the horizon, heading into the next era of the American family.

Women's Higher Education during the "Traditional" Era (1945-Mid-1960s)

During the Traditional era, women's role in higher education contained many of the same elements of the previous eras, but everything was on the brink of change. Colleges continued to treat female students differently than male students, developing an atmosphere of double standards. What changed over the course of the Traditional era was that the women began building a desire to fight back towards the inequalities by the end of this era. Throughout the majority of the Traditional era however, female college students struggled with many of the same issues of the past and fell into similar roles ranging from increased collegiate control and unequal expectations for female students.

In the Traditional era, the role of the female college student was still very different from the role of the male college student. The need to regulate female students more so than male students, first seen in enactment of *in loco parentis* and parietal rules during the Progressive Era, continued throughout the Depression era and into the Traditional era. A student from Middlebury College in the mid-1960s recalled how "women students had to be in their dorms by ten or eleven every weekday night; women students could not wear pants to classes or the library; and while men students could drink alcohol openly outside their dorms, women students could be suspended if caught drinking (Miller-Bernal, 2004, p. 19).

Deborah Bacon served as the University of Michigan's last dean of women from 1950 to 1961 and is an example of the amount of control universities exerted over female students during the Traditional era. Dean Bacon kept a detailed record of all women within the University of Michigan, including reports by housemothers on such things as social adjustment and personal

appearance, as well as informational on any student's academic or disciplinary difficulties. Health Services even reported to the dean's office on female students' visits to the doctor (Walker, 2002). This information was made available to future employers and the FBI. Dean Bacon would write letters home to all female students' mothers to report all behaviors after the first eight weeks of school, including any romantic relationships with male students. Dean Bacon held great power over all women students, for good or ill (Walker, 2002).

More specifically, within the colligate realm of monitoring female students' rules and regulations, Traditional era institutions also regulated female sexual freedom. The larger rationale of parietal rules, or curfews, enacted on female students had to do with controlling sexual conduct. By setting curfew hours and requiring women to sign out, indicating whom they were with and where they were going, college authorities meant to limit opportunities for privacy and sex (Bailey, 2002). Young men traditionally had far fewer restrictions on their freedom, sexual and otherwise, and because universities were concerned with controlling only their own students, they did not find it necessary to restrict men's movements. If women students were supervised and chaperoned and in by eleven at night, the men would not have partners, at least not partners drawn from the population that mattered (Bailey, 2002).

Institutions also controlled sexual freedom of female students through the distribution, or prevention of the distribution, of birth control to female students. By the 1960's, what came to be called the sexual revolution was beginning. The FDA approved the distribution of the birth control pill in 1960, although most institutions still banned prescriptions to be written to single female students in the Student Health Centers (Douglass, 1994). Female students did in fact have a different and more imperative interest in controlling sex than men did, for women could

become pregnant (Bailey, 2002). By denying female students birth control, the institutions denied them the ability to have sex without fear of pregnancy, a luxury all men innately have.

Traditional era female students began to feel that the university did not have the right to oversee all aspects of their lives, especially in terms of their sexual freedom. The "protection" universities forced upon female students actually began to come across as "intrusiveness" (Walker, 2002). By the early to mid-1960s, changing attitudes towards premarital sex were making mockeries of the rules enacted on female college students and many Traditional era women found ways to work around *in loco parentis* and parietal rules (Peril, 2002). At Brown for example, the lights were to be left on and the door open six inches when a girl was visiting, but couples got around those requirements by leaving the lights on in the bathroom and the closet door open (Peril, 2002). During the Traditional era, the restrictions were becoming increasingly quaint, with Bennington College in Vermont setting the female curfew at 6:30 a.m. in 1962, which begged the question why have one at all (Greene, 1964). By the end of the Traditional era, the assumption that college women were adults capable of making their own decisions overpowered the collegiate need to control women and *in loco parentis* ended (Peril, 2002).

During the Traditional era, the affects of higher education for women on family life again contained many of the same elements, although more intensified, of the previous eras. In fact, the female graduates' decision between finding a career or finding a husband intensified by the close of World War II creating a much larger pressure to marry during the Traditional era than in earlier eras. At the close of World War II, America turned to re-establishing normalcy in economic matters and family relations by encouraging women to leave the labor force and rededicate themselves to family (Eisenmann, 2002).

The societal pressure of marriage taking precedence over employment dictated much of what female students focused on during and after college. Assuming a college girl in general was quite as attractive as any other, finding a beau who was smart enough to appreciate her education could be difficult (Peril, 2006). Traditional era men generally looked for a wife with less education than them and according to female dating guidebooks. In 1953, *Redbook* pointed to a series of "leading sociological studies" which showed that, "on the whole, men are attracted to women to whom they can feel intellectually superior. They tend to marry girls whose I.Q. and educational attainments are less than their own" (Gibson, 1953, p. 35). Dating magazines urged readers to act like regular girls, not intellectual harpies, a tip that will help them find a husband, but render them unemployed (Gibson, 1953). While college educated females worked to find a balance between too educated and not educated enough to secure a husband, men were looked up to and thought of as superior for their college achievements.

They Went to College: The College Graduate in America Today, a study published in 1952 looking at the differences between male and female higher education immediately after World War II, provides data showing the trend of the single female graduate. According to the study, 41% of female college graduates under 30 years old were unmarried, while only 25% of non-college educated woman their same age at the time (Havemann & West, 1952). For women over the age of 50, 35% of the college graduates had remained single since graduation, while only eight percent of the uneducated women in the same age bracket remained single (Havemann & West, 1952). This data goes to show that as educated women age they remain single versus as uneducated women age they tend to marry in higher numbers. This could be attributed to the trend that men choose not to marry a woman more educated than themselves, or as this study

suggests, perhaps the college graduates' deeper knowledge of feminism deters the female graduate from the institution of marriage (Havemann & West, 1952).

Not only did higher education affect women's odds of marriage, but also for those who did choose employment, they were limited to a job market that overlaps with their family life. Many traditional female college graduates who did opt for careers only had the choice of employment positions with large carry-over to values for the home, such as teaching, nursing, librarianship, or social work. Positions such as these offered opportunities for developing understanding and abilities that are of value in homemaking (Peril, 2006). In addition, for the workingwoman, having children most often applied a brake to the woman's work life outside the home (Lowe, 2003). Working mothers came in for the deepest scrutiny. Many men, fathers, and even women thought that women could not have a profession and provide adequate care of a family at the same time (Peril, 2006). Through this logic appears the Traditional era notion that a female college graduate cannot "have it all" in life. A stay at home mother scarifies her career for family and a working mother sacrifices her family for a career. The notion that a woman can be a successful career women and a successful mother simultaneously is not something our nation would grasp until the next era of the American family.

Higher education for women during the Traditional era shared many elements similar to the previous eras in history and as history goes, in some realms progress was made while in others the nation had setbacks. Although *in loco parentis* and parietal rules were still heavily enforced on female students to limit their curfews and sexual freedoms, progress was made and near the end of the Traditional era intensified regulations on female students had mostly been lifted. On the home front, however, setbacks arose. With the closing of World War II, Traditional era families assumed that women should return to the home rather than the workforce more so

than ever before. Men felt that women with higher education were not marriage material, while men with higher education were praised. Women who did manage to work and be a homemaker simultaneously received criticism for not providing proper care to her family. Heading into the Modern era of the American family, the acceptance of an educated female serving as both a career woman and a homemaker developed with the beginning of the Women's Liberation Movement.

Women's Higher Education during the Modern Era (Mid-1960s-1990s)

Beginning in the late 1960s at the start of the Modern era, women's position in higher education improved rapidly and substantially (Jones, 2009). Many of the changes are attributed to the Women's Liberation Movement, also known as the feminist movement, in which women became more vocal and strived for equality among the sexes. During the previous eras, the world of American women was limited in almost every respect including family life, the workplace and higher education. Societal pressures forced women to follow one path: to marry, start a family, and dedicate her life to homemaking and in many instances, higher education stood in the way of this path. After the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 and the start of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966, women began to fight for equality to men not only in the home, but also in higher education (Sink, 2008). The result of Betty Friedan's book and the National Organization for Women was women beginning to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all privileges and responsibilities thereof in true equal partnership with men (Sink, 2008). Not only did women's equality begin to develop in workplace and the home, but also in higher education.

A major change in the female role within higher education brought on by the Women's Liberation Movement was the dissipating of the idea that a college education somehow unfits a

woman for household duties (Peril, 2006). Along with the acceptance that a woman could be womanly *and* educated and that homemaking is not the sole purpose of a woman, access to higher education excelled and entry to degrees other than home economics opened up to them. Barriers to women's admission to institutions of higher learning came down quickly, especially after Princeton and Yale Universities began admitting women undergraduates in 1969 (Jones, 2009). Many colleges and universities abandoned explicit gender quotas and admissions policies that discriminated by gender (Jones, 2009). Within colleges and universities, young men and women found themselves sharing classrooms more frequently as women moved out of predominantly female subjects into a wider range of fields (Jones, 2009). The stated aims of college and university women shifted in mass from good marriages to good jobs (Jones, 2009). As the link between women's education and their careers became tighter, women's rates of college and university attendance and completion increased (Jones, 2009). By 1982, women earned the majority of bachelor's degrees, and by 1986 the majority of master's degrees (Harvard University Gazette, 1999). The share of female college and university graduates entering business, law, and medical schools shot up in the 1970s, and in 1972, for the first time in U.S. history, all accredited law schools admitted women (Jones, 2009). By the 1980s the system of higher education had largely ceased to be divided by gender in its admissions policies, its educational objectives, and even its housing (Jones, 2009). The speed at which women moved from the margins to the mainstream of higher education during the Modern era took even knowledgeable observers by surprise (Jones, 1999).

Not only did access to higher education and options of courses to study for women increase during the Modern era, but changes also occurred in the experiences and support women had while on campus. During the Modern era, many women took a more vocal and political role

on campus through their involvement in feminism. After the Women's Liberation Movement, feminism has become part of the university establishment (Agness, 2010). Feminists have secured academic departments, centers, and professional and administrative positions that are now part of the regular budget (Agness, 2010).

There are hundreds of campus-based women's centers at colleges and universities throughout the United States for women to be involved in while enrolled at an institution of higher education (Agness, 2010). Most of these centers emerged as an outgrowth of the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and have been activist bent from the beginning to help provide equality between the sexes on campuses (Clevenger, 1988). One former women's center director describes the sentiment of that time: "Women were angry at the rigidities of their institutions, eager to see some immediate changes, and at the same time aware that an important first step in effecting change was to raise the consciousness of women" (Chamberlain, 1988, p. 1). Female students' natural willingness to share their personal experiences quickly became a political instrument, "consciousness-raising," which was used to build the movement by making women aware of the presumed oppression they faced (Evans, 1979). College campuses were one of the most popular places for this activity, and women's centers were created in part for this purpose (Agness, 2010). The discipline of women's studies also grew out of the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s with the first women's studies department created in 1970 at San Diego State College (now San Diego State University) (Agness, 2010). Women's centers and women's studies departments work together to increase the power of feminism on campuses (Agness, 2010).

Changes during the Modern era in women's role within higher education had effects on women's roles after college including the change of societal attitudes in regards to women's

roles in the family structure. One major change that occurred was a shift from the belief that women are best suited for the home to the belief that many women can and should join have a career. The increase in career bound women is one cause of the variety of family structures present during the Modern era.

Higher education for women during the Modern era led to a societal shift in attitude that women's' talents can and should go beyond homemaking. A nationwide annual survey of incoming college and university freshmen conducted by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) shows a sharp decline in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the share of men and women agreeing with the statement, "The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family" (Astin, 1987, pgs. 71-72, 116-17). The share of freshman women agreeing with the statement fell from 44% in 1967 to 19% in 1985; the share of men agreeing with the statement fell from 67% to 41% over the same period (Astin, 1987). The same survey reveals a large shift in women's career aspirations in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Jones, 2009). The share of women planning to enter elementary or secondary teaching plummeted, beginning in 1968, from a peak of 38% to bottom out at about 10% by 1975 and remain roughly at this level through 1985 (Astin, 1987). Over the same period there was more gradual growth in the share of women aspiring to careers in business, engineering, law, and medicine (Astin, 1987). Combined interest in those fields rose from a low of five percent in 1968 to 29% by 1985 (Astin, 1987). The sharp rise in women's representation in other more traditionally male professional schools and an increase in women working in more varied careers, helps explain why the societal attitudes began to accept females' careers outside of the home.

The Modern era, as previously discussed in the Modern era family structure section of this paper, has no dominant family structure. The increase in career bound women and the

societal acceptance of it is an explanation for the variety of family structures. According to 1998 figures, 46% of all married American women in the prime working ages of 24 through 54 were employed full-time and year-round explaining the commonality of dual earning families (Maushart, 2001). In addition, more career bound women also helps explain the increase in single parent households. The number of single parents increased from 3.8 million in 1970 to 6.9 million in 1980, a rate that averages out to an unprecedented six percent increase each year (Coontz, 1997). The total numbers have continued to mount, reaching 12.2 million single parent households by 1996 (Coontz, 1992). The increase in single parent homes was made possible during the Modern era because women are more gainfully employed and able to support children without dependence on a husband for financial support. Unwed motherhood is financially taxing, but made possible by increased and more equal employment opportunities for women.

Higher education for women during the Modern era was an arena of change and progress for women. The idea that a college education unfit women for the home dissipated and was replaced by the societal acceptance that homemaking is not the sole purpose of a woman. Along with this understanding came accelerated change in the admissions practices of colleges and universities. Barriers to admissions to institutions came down and more colleges began accepting women and allowing them to role in more traditionally male fields of study. Women's centers and classes formed to support women throughout their time in college and to teach them about past oppressions and future goals for their gender. The changes in higher education for women brought changes in the family structure. The societal shift in attitudes that women's talents should go beyond the home lead to more females in the workforce. The increase in female labor force participation caused more varied family structures including dual income families and single parent households. Although much progress towards equality in higher education between

the sexes was made during the Modern era, continued change is still on the horizon for the twenty-first century.

Twenty-First Century Women Still Strive for Gender Equality

As America enters into the twenty-first century, many of the gaps between gender inequalities in family roles and in higher education are closing, but there are still inequalities between men and women present and the fight for equality is not over. America still looks forward to a day when women's intelligence can be nourished without denying love and when women do not need to find their meaning in life solely through their mate's achievements (Friedan, 1963).

Examples of ever-present inequalities within the twenty-first century family structure are found in research on the enormous impact that marriage has on domestic labor even in the twenty-first century. When men enter marriage their participation in housework falls, meanwhile their leisure time increases, becoming greater than any other life stage besides retirement (McMahon, 1999). For women, by contrast, marriage is hard work. A resident man creates extra chores, more washing, higher standards for cooking and more organization to suit his schedules (Maushart, 2001). Research indicates that a husband creates eight hours a week of extra physical labor for his wife (McMahon, 1999).

We are left to wonder why, entering into the twenty-first century, women still face gender inequality in the home. Janice Steil, author of *Marital Equality (1997),* believes the inequalities within marriage and the home remain because woman's role as change agent conflicts with her role as nurturer and relationship maintainer and a man's role as change agent conflicts with his

role as beneficiary of the status quo. When it comes to producing lasting, structural change within marriage, women are disabled and men are disinclined (Steil, 1997). Ken Dempsey (1997), on the other hand, believes that in marriages, as in life in general, people do not really expect equality. What they do expect is equity, or rewards that are commensurate with contributions. If men continue to contribute to the wives' happiness through a variety of means, such as financially, sexually, or emotionally, than women feel less taxed to complete the housework (Dempsey, 1997). One final argument to consider is titled the sleeping with the enemy argument. This theory suggests that gender roles in marriage and family life persist because the arrangement suits both the man and the woman better (Maushart, 2001). Perhaps women, too, experience gender anxiety when traditional roles break down, adopting a sort of siege mentality with respect to what they see as their power base: especially, the running of the home and the care of the children (Maushart, 2001).

An example of ever-present inequalities within twenty-first higher education is present in the public perceptions of female sexuality. Present in twenty-first century higher education is a hookup culture in which male and female students have more casual sexual relations in comparison to the rigid institutional rules banning sexuality of the past. Although institutions take less control over female sexuality, even now there is still is a societal belief that girls who go wild face "consequences" while the boys who egg them on are seen as exercising a bacchanalian rite of passage (Peril, 2006). Two *Chicago Sun Times* reporters investigating the differences in acceptance between genders of the "one night stand, no strings attached" culture found that even though it is generally accepted for college women to want and even initiate sex, it is not okay for her to want it too often, in which case she will be labeled negatively (Rackl & Hermann, 2005). College women today are more sexually liberated, yet double standards remain.

While male college students tend to take the “stride of pride” after a night with a female, women trekking back to their dorm in the morning after a hookup take the “walk of shame” (Rackl & Hermann, 2005). A college girl’s reputation is still a fragile thing when it comes to her sexuality.

Regardless of the reasons for the inequalities still present, one must appreciate that much has changed for the better in the structure of the family and higher education in terms of the female’s role throughout the four eras of the family during the twentieth century. More change is to be expected in the twenty-first century and hopefully true gender role equality within the family structure and in higher education is on the horizon. In *The Feminine Mystique,* Friedan posed the question; what possibilities may exist for love, marriage, and families, when men and women can finally see each other as equals and when they can share not only children, home and garden, but the responsibilities and passions of creative work in and outside of the home? The answer still lies ahead.

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Research Paper Title:

Four Eras of the Twentieth Century Family: The Female Role in the Family and the Female Role within Higher Education

Major Professor: Dr. Patrick Dilley