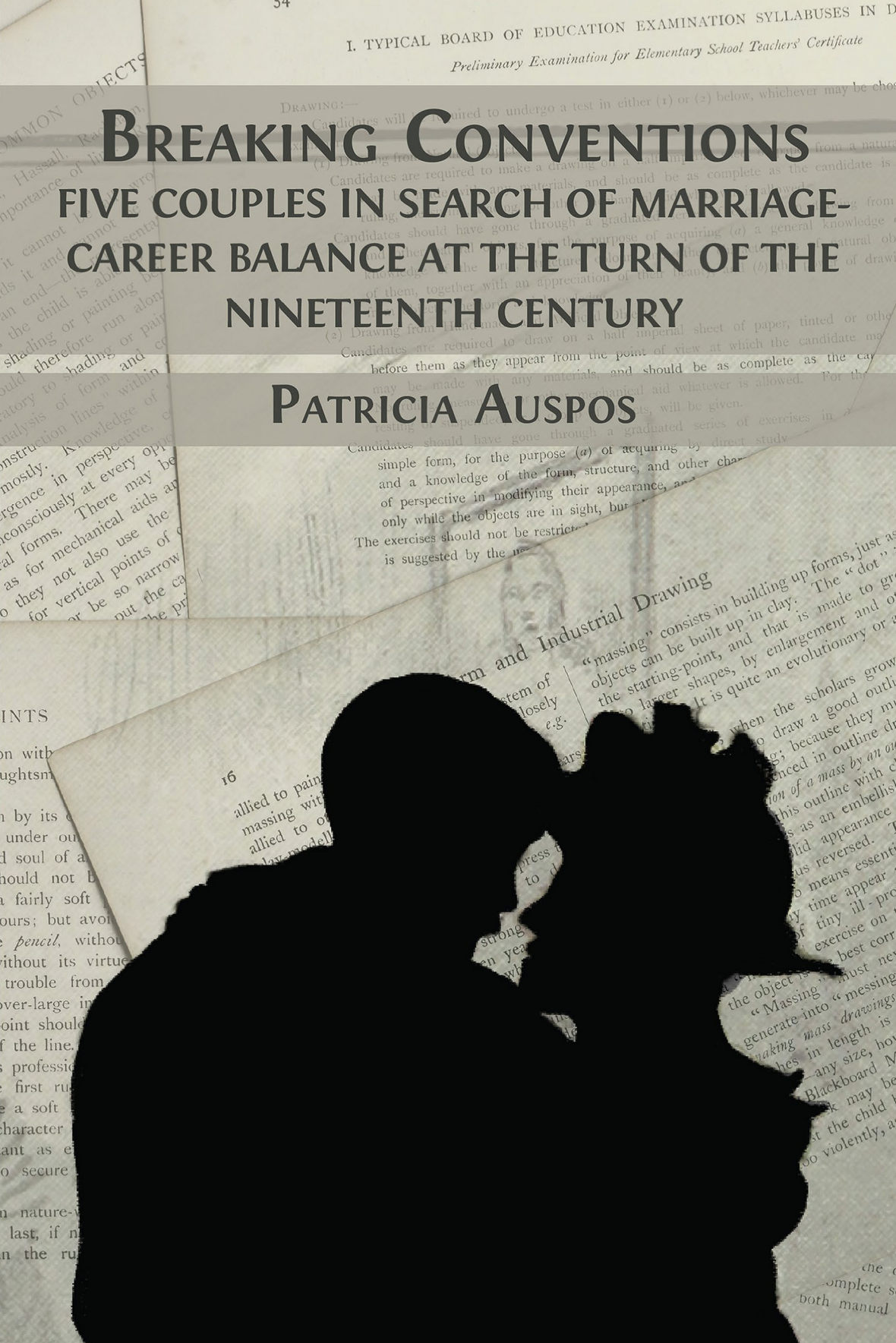
Breaking Conventions

Five Couples in Search of Marriage-Career Balance at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century

Patricia Auspos



https://www.openbookpublishers.com

Patricia Auspos, *Breaking Conventions: Five Couples in Search of Marriage-Career Balance at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century.* Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2023, https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0318

Digital material and resources associated with this volume are available at https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0318#resources.

ISBN Paperback: 978–1-80064–835–7

ISBN Hardback: 978–1-80064–836–4

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978–1-80064–837–1

ISBN Digital ebook (EPUB): 978–1-80064–838–8

ISBN XML: 978–1-80064–840–1

ISBN HTML: 978–1-80064–841–8

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0318

Cover images: background image by Annie Spratt. Vintage page sheet background, July 21, 2018, https://unsplash.com/photos/_dAnK9GJvdY. Silhouettes based on a digitised image from page 388 of "A Romance of N'Shabé," December 4, 2013, https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/11209860083/in/album-72157640584771663/.

Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal.

Epilogue

The roots of patriarchal marriage are deeply embedded in social and economic structures. What disadvantages women in the home, disadvantages them in the workplace — and vice versa. For the current generation of dual career couples, as for this pioneering generation, finding the right balance of work and family typically requires more painful personal choices from women than from men.

As the Palmers, the Youngs, the Parsonses, the Webbs, and the Mitchells learned, addressing only one side of the marriage-career divide will not solve the interrelated problems. The Webbs and the Mitchells, the two couples in this early generation who were especially successful in establishing a more equitable balance of marriage and career, were committed to rewriting the rules of professional life as well as married life. They were as collaborative in their workplaces as in their homes. They founded new types of research organizations and educational institutions, applied research in new ways, explored new questions, and developed new sources of information. Many of these organizations became welcoming havens for women professionals and dual career couples.[1]

These two-pronged efforts reinforced the values the Webbs and the Mitchells espoused in their work and domestic lives in ways that strengthened both. Elsie Clews Parsons's efforts to shape her marriage and affairs in accordance with her feminist beliefs were more problematic.

1 Notably, the New School, the London School of Economics, the Fabian Society, the Bank Street College of Education, and the network of cooperative schools it organized. Claudia Goldin and Larry Katz, distinguished economists who are married to each other, met through their work at the National Bureau of Economic Research in the 1990s. They jokingly refer to NBER as the "National Bureau of Economic Romance" (Peter J. Walker, "Time Traveler: Profile of Harvard Economist Claudia Goldin", *IMF Finance and Development*, December 2018, 40–43, https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/goldin/files/imf_people_in_economics_0.pdf).

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0318.06

She had few opportunities to apply these values in the workplace, although she did try to move her colleagues in that direction. The wives in the more traditional couples — the Palmers and the Youngs — experienced unsettling tensions between their work roles and domestic lives. Unable to break free from conventional gender stereotypes, Alice and Grace deferred to their husbands at home, bowing to their authority rather than asserting their own, and found multiple ways to limit the effects of their revolutionary careers on their roles as wives.

What was needed to bring about major and lasting change in the marriages of this early vanguard of dual career couples was a conscious commitment to more equality in the home and the workplace, and a simultaneous assault on both fronts. A similar approach would prove critical in enabling large numbers of middle-class wives to carve out professional careers in the 1980s and 1990s, long after Alice, Grace, Elsie, Beatrice, and Lucy died. But it would take decades of struggle before that was accomplished. Waves of apparent progress were followed by periods of retrenchment, backlash, and new hurdles. Throughout the lifetimes of these five women, and for decades afterward, middle- and upper-class white women who wanted to combine marriage and career faced enormous professional and personal obstacles. To succeed, they had to be unusually talented and fiercely determined super-achievers.

Later generations of middle-class working wives and mothers wrestled with the same challenges and painful personal decisions as these early women professionals did. In both the workplace and the home, they were bucking cultural norms that continued to define middle-class womanhood in terms of motherhood, wifehood, and homemaking, and expected women to be supportive and deferential to men.

The 1920s–1940s

Although the number of female professionals grew fairly steadily but slowly from the 1920s through the 1960s, women made up only a tiny proportion of what remained an overwhelmingly male professional world in America and Britain during this period.[2] As a result, even

2 Women made up between 4 percent and 6 percent of doctors, between 1 percent and 3 percent of lawyers, and between 22 percent and 26 percent of college and university teachers in the US during these decades. See Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern*

highly trained and credentialed women in law, medicine, science, and academia were marginalized into lower paying, less prestigious jobs and venues, with limited opportunities for advancement, higher status, and higher pay.[3]

Married women encountered even more obstacles than single women. In the United States, the propriety of careers for married women was hotly debated throughout the 1920s in newspapers and magazines, women's colleges and alumnae associations, and women's organizations.[4] From the mid-1920s into the 1940s, public and private employers — school boards; government agencies at the local, state, and federal levels; colleges and universities; and businesses — adopted marriage bars, anti-nepotism rules, and more informal methods of discrimination to keep married women out of white collar and professional jobs.[5] In Britain, the Civil Service, the British Broadcasting Corporation, local government councils (who hired doctors as well as teachers), and private firms had marriage bars in place from the 1920s

Feminism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), Table 7.1, p. 291. Women comprised about 20 percent of British doctors in 1944, 14 percent of college and university faculty in England in 1931, and 2 percent of solicitors in 1957. See Wendy Moore, *No Man's Land: The Trailblazing Women Who Ran Britain's Most Extraordinary Military Hospital During World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 2020), p. 296; BBC News, "75 Years of Women Solicitors," December 19, 1997; Lady Hale, "100 Years of Women in the Law: From Bertha Cave to Brenda Hale", Speech at King's College, London, 20 March 2019; and Fernanda H. Perrone, "Women Academics in England, 1870–1930", *History of Universities* 12 (1993), 339–77, https://scholarship.libraries.rutgers.edu/esploro/outputs/journalArticle/991031549861904646.

3 Women's marginalization is an important theme in the histories of women in these professions. See Regina Markell Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy and Science: Women Physicians in American Medicine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Mary Roth Walsh, *Doctors Wanted: No Women Need Apply* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Virginia G. Drachman, *Sisters in Law: Women Lawyers in Modern American History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, *Women in Law* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1983); Margaret W. Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America*, 3 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982–2012); Helen McCarthy, *Double Lives, A History of Working Motherhood* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

4 See Cott, *Grounding*, pp. 181–211; Lois Scharf, *To Work or To Wed, Female Employment, Feminism, and the Great Depression* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985), pp. 22–32; Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy*, pp. 319–29.

5 See Claudia Goldin, "Marriage Bars: Discrimination against Married Women Workers, 1920s to 1950s", National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 2747 (October 1988), https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w2747/w2747.pdf; Scharf, pp. 43–110; Rossiter, I, pp. 141–42, 195–97.

until the mid-1940s.[6] Marriage bars prohibited employers from hiring married women or retaining women employees who married. Anti-nepotism rules, designed to protect institutions from hiring unqualified relatives of staff members, in practice excluded wives from jobs for which they were highly qualified. These discriminatory practices became more widespread in the 1930s, when they were promoted as a way to maintain jobs for male wage earners who were supporting families. But they started before the Great Depression, continued afterward, and were especially common in highly feminized fields like teaching and clerical work. They reflected a strong white middle-class cultural bias against working wives and mothers, not just a desire to protect men's jobs.[7] Their message was clear: a married woman's place was in the home.

Because of their family obligations, married women were considered to be less reliable as workers than their male colleagues or unmarried women. Male resistance was fueled by the assumption that women would marry and leave the profession, wasting their expensive training and denying scarce opportunities to (more deserving) men. This concern reflected a career model, based on male experience, which required long, uninterrupted years of full-time work. The male model ignored evidence showing that some married women professionals followed a different career trajectory by taking time off when their children were young and working additional years later in their careers.[8] Rather than adjust their model, or introduce more family-friendly policies in professional offices, men chose to limit women's entry into the professions or avoided hiring them.

Efforts to keep middle-class women in the home came not only from the professional world, but also from escalating expectations about women's roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers. From the 1920s on, children were seen as the greatest impediment to combining marriage and career.[9] While it had been acceptable, even desirable, to delegate

6 Mary Ann C. Elston, "Women Doctors in the British Health Services: A Sociological Study of their Careers and Opportunities" (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, 1986), pp. 312–58, https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/247/1/uk_bl_ethos_375527.pdf; McCarthy, *Double*, pp. 139–53.

7 Cott, *Grounding*, pp. 209–11; Scharf, pp. 80, 105–6, 142–43.

8 Walsh, pp. 252–54.

9 Virginia MacMakin Collier, *Marriage and Career: A Study of One Hundred Women who are Wives, Mothers, Homemakers and Professional Workers* (New York: Bureau of Vocational Information, 1926), p. 116. Viola Klein, *Britain's Married Women Workers*

housework and child care to servants in the Victorian era, by the 1920s, middle-class mothers were expected to spend more time with their children and personally fulfill the more exacting standards of "scientific mothering" that were being taught in colleges. A precipitous decline in the availability of household servants in the interwar years increased the pressure on middle-class women to be hands-on mothers and homemakers.[10] A heavy reliance on servant care for their children set many upper- and middle-class working mothers apart from their peers who did not work outside the home.[11]

Despite the obstacles and shibboleths, growing numbers of women professionals felt they could combine marriage and career rather than having to choose between them. The percentage of women working in professional jobs in the US who were married doubled from 12 percent in 1910 to just under 25 percent in 1930, and continued to climb as younger professionals supplanted the women of an earlier generation who had chosen career over marriage.[12]

Domestic Accommodations

For decades, dual career marriages upset household routines by changing women's roles and behavior but did not ask much of men, except forbearance. From the 1920s through the 1950s, studies of middle-class wives who had careers outside the home identified supportive husbands as a key condition that made it possible for them to work, even

(London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, and New York: Humanities Press, 1965), pp. 18, 52; Judith Hubback, *Wives Who Went to College* (London: William Heinemann, 1957), p. 79. See also Cott, *Grounding*, pp. 197–98; Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy*, p. 321; Drachman, pp. 245–46.

10 Studies that document higher standards of childrearing and homemaking coupled with a decline in servants are strikingly similar in the US and Britain. See Cott, *Grounding*, pp. 165–70; Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914–1999*, 2nd edn. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 83–85, 220; Deirdre Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty: Women between the Wars, 1918–1939* (London: Pandora, 1989), Chapter 1 and p. 103; Hubback, *Wives*, p. 7; Margaret Marsh, *Suburban Lives* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), pp. 137–38,145; McCarthy, *Double*, pp. 41, 158–59.

11 Ninety of the one-hundred middle-class wives with careers whom Collier surveyed in 1926 employed servants to take care of their homes and children, at a time when less than 5 percent of American households had domestic servants (Cott, *Grounding*, pp. 196–97).

12 Cott, *Grounding*, Table 6.3, p. 183.

if the men provided little more than sympathy and encouragement.[13] (Good health, training and work experience before marriage, short and flexible hours of work, household assistance, and reliable arrangements for child care were also important.) Husbands pitched in from time to time, but outside of feminist circles, there was little expectation that they should play a substantial role in homemaking or childrearing. Certainly not that they should share childrearing and domestic tasks equally. Or that a husband should be prepared to sacrifice his own career for the sake of his wife's work.

An exceptional husband might turn down a high-level position at a university that could not accommodate his wife because of anti-nepotism rules, take a job at a less prestigious university if it would be advantageous to his wife's career, or leave a university that ended his wife's employment after they married.[14] But such incidences were rare. More commonly, women made the compromises in order to advance the man's career, an approach that reinforced traditional assumptions about men's and women's roles.

Married couples who worked in the same field often worked in partnership with each other, a strategy that made it easier for the wives to combine work and family. Some of these collaborations may have come closer to the Webbs's egalitarian partnership than to Grace Chisholm Young's subordinate relationship with her husband, but the model of a more gifted male being assisted by a devoted, supportive, detail-oriented woman persisted. Helpmate partnerships with a husband were promoted as a way to ease the tensions highly-educated women encountered when they tried to balance career and family.[15]

---

13 Collier, pp. 81–86, 113, 121. Anne Byrd Kennon, "College Wives Who Work", *Journal of the American Association of University Women*, 20 (June 1927), 100–5. Hubback, *Wives*, pp. viii, 95, 159; Klein, p. 77.

14 For examples of husbands who made career sacrifices, see Rossiter, I, pp. 195–97, and Claire Palay, "Lea Miller's Protest: Married Women's Jobs at the University of Washington", HSTAA 105 (Winter 2010) https://depts.washington.edu/depress/women_uw_lea_miller.shtml.

15 Ethel Puffer Howes advocated for this in the 1920s (Cott, *Grounding*, p. 203) and Judith Hubback did so in the 1950s (Hubback, *Wives*, p. 47). An example from the 1940s is Helen Murray Free, who worked with her husband Alfred Free on developing a breakthrough diabetes test. She credited him with having the ideas, while she was the technician. Despite their highly productive partnership in the lab which he headed, their employer, Miles Laboratories, transferred her to a different division for several years, in accordance with the company's anti-nepotism policy.

Middle-class marriages in general were becoming more companionate and affectionate, as husbands and wives shared more interests and spent more leisure time together. Surveys of middle-class wives who worked in the 1920s, which were widely commented on in the popular press, found that their marriages were more companionate, and the spouses were happier for being able to share professional interests as well as family activities.[16] But being more companionate was no guarantee these dual career marriages were more equal: that required commitment and intentionality on the part of both spouses.

Professional Accommodations

Middle-class white women who combined marriage and career in these decades fell back on the same strategies that the women in the early generation utilized. To better accommodate their families, many sought part-time work, jobs with flexible hours, work that could be done at home, or work that focused on children's well-being or development. Those who worked fulltime were supported by a number of household staff. Some created more accommodating work environments by partnering with their husbands, establishing their own practices or businesses, or working in organizations headed by women. (Marriage rates were historically higher among women doctors and lawyers than in other professions because these women could establish their own practices, often in partnership with a husband, a male relative, or another woman.[17]) Other wives worked in unpaid positions or as independent scholars and researchers. Sometimes these were welcome choices that eased the challenges of caring for family and home while pursuing a career. Sometimes they were forced choices that resulted from discrimination in the professional world, constraints imposed by

Denise Gellene, "Helen Murray Free, 98, Chemist Who Developed a More Efficient Diabetes Test", *The New York Times*, May 4, 2021, A20.

16 More companionate in general: Cott, *Grounding*, pp.156–57; McCarthy, *Double*, pp. 12–13; Pugh, pp. 224–26. More companionate and satisfying marriages among middle-class couples with working wives: Collier, pp. 81–86, 121; Kennon, p. 100. On the potential and difficulties of dual career marriages among women lawyers, see Drachman, pp. 211–21, 241–47; among women doctors, Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy*, pp. 136–38, 324–28.

17 Drachman, pp. 179–80; Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy*, pp. 136–37.

husbands and families, or the limitations of work environments that did not welcome women or make accommodations for working mothers.[18]

Too often, these approaches limited the wife's opportunities in the workplace. They trapped many women in lower-level positions or relegated them to the margins of professional work. They foreclosed opportunities for advancement, higher pay, and recognition. They also reinforced traditional gender stereotypes that depicted men as creative thinkers and leaders, and women as detail-oriented implementers and helpmates. They helped to keep working wives in traditional roles and secondary positions in the home as well as the workplace.

In professional and white collar offices, female employees typically became helpers, enablers, secretaries, and assistants, while men were directors and bosses. This hierarchy did not challenge the traditional gender mold. The problem for women professionals was that they *were* breaking the mold: by virtue of their training, they were men's equals, not their inferiors. But both society and individual couples found ways to curtail and counteract the effects of these changes rather than embracing new roles or directly confronting old stereotypes.

Outside of feminist circles, there was little public questioning, until the 1960s, of the patriarchal underpinnings of married life or workplace routines that made it so difficult for women professionals who were trying to straddle both worlds. The feminist movement was weakened and fragmented in America and Britain during and after the 1920s, and many middle-class wives who worked distanced themselves from feminism. They looked upon the difficult decisions that women had to make as painful personal choices rather than structural and systemic problems that could be addressed by collective action.[19]

---

18 These strategies are documented in the surveys of middle-class working wives conducted in the 1920s and 1950s and the histories of women in law, medicine, science, and academia cited previously. Cott, *Grounding*, pp. 189–208 and McCarthy, *Double*, pp. 139–53, provide helpful overviews.

19 For post-1920 feminist views on combining career and marriage in the US, see Scharf, pp. 21–42; on the role of feminism in Britain after 1920, see Pugh, pp. 235–65. Cott, *Grounding*, pp. 232–39, and McCarthy, *Double*, p. 153, also discuss the tensions between feminism and professionalism in these decades. The studies of college-educated wives who worked outside the home in Britain and the US all stressed that solutions needed to be individual and personal; the authors distanced themselves and their subjects from what they referred to as old style feminism. See Collier, p. 34; Kennan, p. 102; Hubback, *Wives*, pp. 83, 85, 87; Klein, p. 77.

The 1950s and 1960s

The 1950s was a particularly difficult period for middle-class American women who wanted both marriage and a career. In a disheartening replay of what had happened in Britain after World War I, female doctors and scientists who had made significant professional advances during World War II were pushed aside and sidelined when men returned from war service and tried to reclaim the world of science as a male preserve.[20] Once again, women were expected to retreat to domestic life.

As Betty Friedan explained in her immensely influential best-seller, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), middle-class culture in 1950s America was shaped by a powerful domestic ideology that taught women their primary responsibilities were to be wives, mothers, and homemakers, and they should find fulfillment in those roles.[21] Women's magazines, advertising campaigns, and advice manuals like Dr. Benjamin Spock's best-selling book on infant and child care (first published in 1946) reinforced the message. The ideal of the male breadwinner supported by a full-time homemaker wife who raised the children was the model around which white middle-class life was organized. Smaller percentages of women earned college degrees and PhDs in the 1950s than in previous decades. White women married earlier, moved to the suburbs, and had more children. (As Stephanie Coontz points out, Friedan was writing about the lives of white women, and ignored the significantly different experience of Black women. Much higher proportions of middle-class Black women, especially upper-middle-class Black women, worked outside the home in the 1950s, whether they were mothers or childless.[22])

---

20 For the backlash in Britain, see Elston, pp. 289–308, and Moore, pp. 276–90. For the US experience, see Rossiter, II, pp. xv–xviii, 27–49.

21 Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 2013), originally published in 1963.

22 Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* (New York: Basic Books, 2012) notes that 64 percent of Black upper-class mothers worked outside the home in the 1950s, compared to only 27 percent of white upper-class mothers (pp. 121–38). The higher their social class, the more likely Black women were to work outside the home. In contrast, mothers in the upper middle-class were the least likely social group of white women to have jobs. See Coontz, and also Bart Landry, *Black Working Wives: Pioneers of the American Family Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). He

The percentage of women professionals who were trying to combine marriage and career continued to grow, although the total numbers were still very small.[23] Despite signs of progress, such women still faced major obstacles. Marriage bars were lifted, but anti-nepotism policies continued. After decades of not employing married women, women's colleges began to retain women faculty who married; they also started to hire married women for tenure-track positions. But these schools were also, increasingly hiring male faculty members and paying them more than they paid women.[24] Ambitious women found a compelling champion in Millicent McIntosh, married mother of five, who became head of Barnard College in 1947 when her youngest child was eight. Featured on the front cover of *Newsweek Magazine* in 1951, "Mrs. Mac" became a national spokesperson for the idea that women could be good wives and mothers while simultaneously enjoying a career.[25]

Male prejudice against female professionals remained strong. The demand for science workers exploded in the 1950s and 1960s, but women scientists continued to be pigeonholed into jobs as men's assistants — positions for which they were overqualified, and which did not offer opportunities for recognition or advancement. Coed colleges and universities hired relatively few women.[26] Similar difficulties beset women doctors and lawyers, often leaving them underemployed, underutilized, and underpaid.[27]

---

argues that middle-class Black couples pioneered an ethic of dual earner marriages in nineteenth-century America.

23 Rising marriage rates among women scientists: Rossiter, II, p. 114. Among women lawyers and doctors: Drachman, pp. 179–80 and Table 9, p. 257.

24 Rossiter, II, pp. 220–34.

25 Karen W. Arenson, "Millicent McIntosh, 102 Dies; Taught Barnard Women to Balance Career and Family", *The New York Times*, January 5, 2001, and Karen W. Arenson, "Feminist's Centennial", *The New York Times*, November 19, 1998. Bob McCaughey, "Mrs. Mac" (Blog: July 24, 2017), https://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/ram31/documents/6-tough-times-depression-war-other-distractions/deans-presidents/millicent-c-mcintosh/.

26 Rossiter, II, pp. 122–28, 149–64.

27 Walsh, pp. 255–60. Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy*, pp. 339–85. Although she was ranked in the top 10 percent of her Stanford University Law School class, the only job offer Sandra Day received when she graduated in 1952 was as a legal secretary. After she married John Jay O'Connor in December 1952, she volunteered to do legal research and write memos for the San Mateo county attorney's office, working for no pay and sharing space with a secretary. It was months before she was paid for her work. See Evan Thomas, *First: Sandra Day O'Connor* (New York: Random House, 2019), pp. 43 and 52. Ruth Bader Ginsburg encountered similar discrimination

Fears of "wastage" continued to disadvantage women who sought professional training and jobs. Male-dominated work environments made few if any accommodations (part-time jobs, maternity leaves, rehiring guarantees) to ease the burdens on working mothers, and some adopted practices and policies that made it more difficult for them.[28] In contrast, women's colleges began to develop programs and supports for highly-credentialed women graduates who had taken time off to rear children and wanted to reenter the workforce.[29]

Middle-class women in Britain also heard very mixed messages about working outside the home in the 1950s.[30] The traditional middle-class model of working husband and stay-at-home housewife and mother was touted in popular culture, and reinforced by the well-publicized views of male psychiatrists. Stressing the critical importance of the maternal-child bond, these experts raised fears about the dire consequences of juvenile delinquency and other maladjustments if women abandoned their pre-school age children and worked outside the home.[31]

In spite of these alarmist warnings, the exploding demand for women's labor in Britain encouraged older wives, both middle-class and working-class, to return to the labor force after their children were grown, and even consider working part-time while their children were in school. Surveys of well-educated middle-class women identified a minority who were successfully combining careers and motherhood, and others who wanted to work if they could find appropriate part-time jobs. These studies, which were widely reported in the popular

---

when she, the mother of a three-year-old, graduated in a tie for first place in her class at Columbia Law School in 1959. No private firm made her a job offer. No federal district judge in New York would hire her as a law clerk until a Columbia Law School professor threatened to stop referring Columbia graduates to him as law clerks in the future. See Jane Sherron De Hart, *Ruth Bader Ginsburg* (New York: Knopf, 2018), pp. 76–81.

28 Some medical schools in the 1950s required pregnant women and new mothers to take time off from their studies (Walsh, p. 255).

29 Maggie Doherty, *The Equivalents: A Story of Art, Female Friendship, and Liberation in the 1960s* (New York: Knopf, 2020) discusses the path-breaking role the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Study, launched in 1960, played in advancing older women's careers.

30 Stephanie Spencer, *Gender, Work and Education in Britain in the 1950s* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005). McCarthy, *Double*, pp. 232–34.

31 John Bowlby, author of *Childcare and the Growth of Love* (1953) was the major proponent. McCarthy, *Double*, pp. 247–49, discusses the powerful influence of his ideas. Klein, pp. 147–49, provided a cogent refutation of Bowlby.

press, also showed that middle-class husbands were more approving of working wives than husbands in the lower social classes. The men voiced more reservations than their wives acknowledged, however.[32]

Newly recognizing the value of maternal instincts and experience, "caring" professions like teaching, social work, nursing, and medicine, under pressure to meet the demands of the expanding welfare state and the National Health Service, began to develop part-time jobs and retraining opportunities to bring older middle-class mothers back to work in the UK. Older women and women with school age children were also recruited for low-paying, unskilled jobs. But professions traditionally dominated by men — the law, the senior civil service, the financial industry — continued to uphold the career model of full-time work with no major breaks, and made few if any accommodations for married women.[33] By 1966, women still made up only 9 percent of the higher professions in Britain, an increase from just 5 percent in 1921.[34]

The question of whether marriage and career were incompatible roles for middle-class women was hotly debated in the British popular press, just as it had been during the 1920s in America. Like the American studies of working wives in the 1920s, surveys conducted in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s emphasized the satisfactions of dual career marriages among the educated middle-class elites, finding that shared work interests and shared family activities made these couples more companionate.[35]

The obstacles experienced by these highly privileged women — women who were overwhelmingly college graduates from middle-class backgrounds, married to men who had similar backgrounds and who worked in business or professional jobs — were of a different order than the difficulties encountered by their working class and immigrant counterparts who lacked their resources and were mostly low-wage factory workers, personal helpers, care givers, and cleaners.[36]

32 Higher support among husbands in higher social classes: Klein, p. 67. Less support than wives credited: Klein, pp. 62–65. See also, Hubback, *Wives*, pp. 37–38. Press coverage: Helen McCarthy, "Social Science and Married Women's Employment in Post-War Britain", *Past and Present* 233 (November, 2016), 269–305 (pp. 288–98), https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtw035.

33 McCarthy, *Double*, pp. 264–79; Elston, pp. 384–88.

34 Pugh, p. 288.

35 Klein, pp. 60–62, 78–79; Hubback, *Wives*, pp. viii, 85, 95, 159, 146.

36 McCarthy, *Double*, pp. 289–320; Pugh, p. 288.

Supporters of careers for middle-class wives did not challenge other gendered stereotypes that defined middle-class marriage. Homemaking and childrearing were still assumed to be the woman's responsibility. Wives who worked outside the home were still expected to take care of the home and children, make whatever adjustments and compromises were required, and navigate between the perilous shores of self-assertion on the job and self-deprecation in the home. Husbands were praised for offering support and encouragement, but not expected to provide much substantive assistance. If they experienced a conflict between career and family, British women were told to put family first.[37]

"A Quiet Revolution": The 1970s and After

A widespread assault on the patriarchal underpinnings of middle-class marriages and workplaces took hold in the 1960s and resulted in momentous changes. Fueled in part by second wave feminism, women made new and stronger demands for equity in education, the workplace, and the home. In the 1960s and early 1970s, they won legislative protections and legal redress against problems that had long been treated as personal and individual but were newly seen as structural and systemic. Legislation supported the principle of equal pay for equal work, prohibited discrimination by sex in education and employment, and put an end to admissions quotas, marriage bars, anti-nepotism rules, and other practices that disadvantaged women in the workplace.

Starting in the 1970s, white middle-class women flooded into professional schools and graduate schools in record numbers. Intent on having careers, they married later, had smaller families, and stayed in the work force after they had children.[38] In the twenty-first century, women have outnumbered men in medical schools and law schools in

37 Hubback, *Wives*, pp. 93,159; Klein, p. 18. A frustrated career woman who took second place to her husband, Judith Hubback was keenly sensitive to navigating the tensions between women's work roles and family roles, and understood the need to make compromises for the sake of one's family. See her memoir, *Dawn to Dusk: Autobiography of Judith Hubback* (Asheville, NC: Chiron Publications, 2015).

38 Claudia Goldin, "The Quiet Revolution that Transformed Women's Employment, Education, and Family", *American Economic Review*, 26 (May 2006), 1–21 (pp. 20–21), https://doi.org/10.1257/000282806777212350. Pugh, pp. 324, 339–43; McCarthy, *Double*, pp. 331–34.

the United States and Britain.[39] Women now make up almost 40 percent of doctors and lawyers in the US, and more than 40 percent of those fields in Britain.[40] For more than a decade, women have received more than half of the doctorates awarded by American universities.[41]

Women who combine marriage and career are no longer flouting white middle-class conventions; they are part of a trend that is reconfiguring middle-class culture and slowly reshaping workplace practices and domestic life. By 2019, the majority of two-parent households with dependent children in the United States and Britain had two parents who worked.[42]

These changes are gradually transforming men's lives as well as women's. College-educated women, especially GenXers and Millennials, increasingly expect their male spouses and partners to share equally in housekeeping and childrearing. Men's expectations about marriage and their roles in childcare and housekeeping are changing as well. Over the past twenty-five years, college-educated fathers aged 25–34 have increased the amount of time they spend taking care of their children,

39 Tom Moberly, "Number of Women Entering Medical School Rises after Decade of Decline", *BMJ*, 27 January 2018, p. 167, https://www.bmj.com/bmj/section-pdf/959692?path=/bmj/360/8138/Careers.full.pdf; Patrick Boyle, "Nation's Physician Workforce Evolves: More Women, a bit older, and toward different specialties", Association of American Medical Colleges, February 2, 2021, https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/nation-s-physician-workforce-evolves-more-women-bit-older-and-toward-different-specialties. Elizabeth Olson, "Women Make Up Majority of US Law Students for the First Time", *The New York Times*, December 16, 2016.

40 Jennifer Cheeseman Day, "Number of Women Lawyers at Record High But Men Still Highest Earners", US Census Bureau (May 8, 2018), https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2018/05/women-lawyers.html; Boyle, "Nation's Physician's Workforce"; Mark Easton, "Which Jobs Have More Women than Men?", *BBC News*, 8 March 2012, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-17287275.

41 Niall McCarthy, "Women are still earning more doctoral degrees than men in the US", October 5, 2018, https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2018/10/05/women-are-still-earning-more-doctoral-degrees-than-men-in-the-u-s-infographic/?sh=5cad137345b6.

42 In the US, 62 percent in 2015: Pew Research Center, "Raising Kids and Running a Household: How Working Parents Share the Load" (14 November 2015), 1–23, https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/11/04/raising-kids-and-running-a-household-how-working-parents-share-the-load/. In Britain, 73 percent in 2019: Office of National Statistics, "Employment Activity of Mothers and Fathers in a Family" in *Families and the Labour Market, UK 2019* (24 October 2019), https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/familiesandthelabourmarketengland/2019.

and many say they would like to have more time with their offspring. In 2015, two-thirds of college-educated men and four-fifths of college-educated women thought the best marriages were those in which both spouses worked and shared household and childcare responsibilities.[43] In the US, Millennials and GenXers are especially likely to form households in which both parents work full-time.[44] Spouses in such households are more likely to report that they share childcare and home responsibilities equally than spouses in households where the father is employed full-time and the mother works part-time or not all. When both parents have full-time jobs, they are also more likely to say that their careers are given equal priority.[45]

Progress has been made, but much more is needed. The gender gap in domestic roles and expectations has shrunk, but it is still substantial. Middle-class men take more responsibility for childrearing and domestic tasks than they once did, but wives still do the lion's share of this work. Women continue to report that their male partners do less than the men say they do.

The unequal division of labor between working parents became more starkly evident during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020–2021 — as working mothers took on the brunt of home schooling, childcare, and housework in two-earner families when schools, day care facilities, and offices shut down — but it has a very long history. Even before the ravages of Covid-19, a greater proportion of college-educated wives than husbands said they had trouble balancing family and work life and felt it was harder to advance in a job as a working parent.[46] Balancing

43 Claudia Goldin, *Career and Family, Women's Century-Long Journey Toward Equity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021), pp. 207–8. College-educated fathers increased the amount of time they spent with their children from 5 hours per week in 1990 to 10 hours per week in 2015. College-educated mothers increased the time they spent with their offspring from 13 hours per week to 21 hours per week over the same years.

44 Genevieve Smith and Ishita Rustagi, "Dual Career Couples are the New Norm. What Business Leaders Need to Know", Berkeley Haas Center for Equity, Gender, and Leadership (January 16, 2020), https://berkeleyequity.medium.com/dual-career-couples-are-the-new-norm-what-business-leaders-need-to-know-8d9e1489726c.

45 Pew Research Center, pp. 3–4.

46 Pew Research Center, pp. 5–7. See also, Claire Cain Miller, "Young Men Embrace Gender Equality, But They Still Don't Vacuum", *The New York Times*, February 11, 2020, and Claire Cain Miller, "Nearly Half of Men Say They Do Most of the Home Schooling. 3 Percent of Women Agree", *The New York Times*, May 6, 2020.

work and family remains especially difficult for working-class women, women of color, and immigrants who are more likely to work in lower-paying jobs with inflexible hours and lack the financial resources available to women in professional jobs.[47]

Home life is changing, but the structure and demands of most professional jobs have been slow to respond to these developments. This adds to the difficulties married women with children experience when they try to balance work and family. Although there have been many legal advances for women, women still earn less than their male counterparts over the course of their careers and are underrepresented at the top pay scales and highest leadership positions — a gap that reflects the time they take off to bring up their children.[48] There is growing flexibility in work hours in some professional jobs, but family-friendly environments are still the exception, and more common in fields that are dominated by women.[49] Paternity leaves are more available, but often underutilized.[50] Most professional work still takes place in a work environment that reflects the career model developed in the nineteenth century, when a

47 During the Covid-19 pandemic, 2020–2021, these categories of female workers were disproportionately affected by job losses, compared to men, in part because they did not have jobs they could do remotely. Alisha Haridasani Gupta, "Covid Shuttered Schools Everywhere. So Why was the 'She-cession' Worse in the U.S.?" *The New York Times*, May 28, 2021. See also, Patricia Cohen and Tiffany Hsu, "Pandemic Could Scar a Generation of Working Mothers", *The New York Times*, June 3, 2020; Titan Alon et al., "The Impact of Covid-19 on Gender Equality", National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 26947 (April 2020), https://www.nber.org/papers/w26947; and Brigid Francis-Devine, Andrew Powell, and Niamh Foley, "Corona Virus: Impact on the Labour Market", Briefing Paper 8898, House of Commons Library, 25 February 2021, https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/37509/1/CBP-8898%20%281%29%20%28redacted%29.pdf. For the long history of gender inequality in childcare and home management, see Arlie Hochschild with Anne Machung, *The Second Shift, Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* (New York: Viking, 1989), and McCarthy, *Double*.

48 Goldin, *Career*, pp. 5, 151–75.

49 For the US experience, see Goldin, *Career*, pp. 176–220. On the growing flexibility of the medical profession in Britain, see Laura Jefferson, Karen Bloor, and Alan Maynard, "Women in Medicine: Historical Perspectives and Recent Trends", *British Medical Bulletin*, 114 (June 2015), 5–15, https://doi.org/10.1093/bmb/ldv007; Katie Nicholas, "Literature Search: Flexible Working in Healthcare" (UK: Health Education England Knowledge Management Team, 9 September 2020), https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/Flexible%20working%20in%20healthcare.pdf.

50 Seema Jayachandran, "There's a Way to Give Paid Paternity Leave a Push", *The New York Times*, June 27, 2021, p. 6.

man worked very long hours and was supported by a stay-at-home wife who took care of their children and domestic needs.

Without structural adjustments in the workplace, professional advancement will continue to come at a high price for married women with children. Compromise solutions (like "mommy tracks") that restrict a woman's opportunities, reduce her earning power, and underuse her talents not only undermine her position in the workforce but also affect the division of labor within the home. This undercuts what economist Claudia Goldin has dubbed "couple equity": wives who reduce their work hours devote more time to the house and children, while their husbands devote more effort to their jobs.[51] Women rarely make up later in their careers for the time and money they lose if they reduce their work hours while they are raising children — a reality that perpetuates gender inequities in the workforce as well as in the home. It is a vicious cycle.

Nevertheless, the revolutionary changes in the career trajectories of middle-class women that began in the 1970s and 1980s have transformed women's lives and opportunities. The combination of marriage and career — once heroic and extraordinary — is now a necessary aspect of the majority of American and British women's lives, from the hardworking grocery store clerks and health care professionals on whose service everyone depends, to the CEOs and academics that make up the highest echelons of professional life.

The five remarkable women depicted in this book — and the equally remarkable men who married them — helped to pave the way for these changes. Alice, Grace, Elsie, Beatrice, and Lucy would be delighted to know that middle-class women have so fully entered public life and are no longer expected to choose between marriage and a career. They would be thrilled to see that men are taking more responsibility for rearing children and managing the home, although they might lament the loss of live-in servants. And they would undoubtedly applaud the shifting notions of gender — especially standards of masculinity — that are helping to turn modern-day husbands into supportive partners and companionate spouses for accomplished women who find fulfillment in working outside the home.

51 Goldin, *Career*, p. 205.