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How the Second-Wave Feminist Movement Transformed the Institution of Marriage: A  
Comprehensive Study of Women's Roles at the Threshold of Social Augmentation

With the cessation of the Great Depression, World War II, and the ascension of America to the forefront of the global theater, individual hopes for normalcy and tranquil existences became vital in the minds of young men and women. As the chapter of wartime closed, and the soldiers returned from their battlements, the Golden Age of Marriage began. As women were forced out of the public sphere they had inhabited throughout World War II, and coerced back into the domestic world; the existence of women was once again devalued in all forms of life. The rise of the second-wave feminist movement in the early years of the 1960's allowed women's roles to forever be transformed. It is through the grassroots liberalism of the sixties, the influx of new, self-reflective feminist writings, rejection of domestic professionalism, the contraception revolution, and even the advent of intense antifeminism that the panorama of modern matrimony develops in the American sociopolitical arena.

When concerning marriage, its impacts, and femininity, historiographical emphasis from renown scholars has often been to focus on the events of the nineteenth-century. The development of the industrialized world during the Victorian-era has led historians to center their studies on the maturity of the dichotomized sociopolitical landscape that influenced the ways in

which gendered spaces, and their consequential expectations, are characterized. By examining this dynamic era, we find that the historiography of marriage studies is found predominantly here, especially when discussing the changes in women's narratives. The influx of industrialization, according to scholars like Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, in their work *Women, Work, and Family*, the transition from a pre-industrial world, where the economy of the family was based on wages from familiar labor such as agriculture, to the family consumer economies of the twentieth-century with the rise of department stores, demonstrate that women's roles, and their interactions within the public sphere, changed drastically from that of their male counterparts.<sup>1</sup> While women were forced to remove themselves, their autonomy, and political voices under the "cult of domesticity", men moved into spaces where their power became universal. For example, as urbanization became increasingly popular with factory jobs, women were left under the complete submission of their husbands as they were cut off from financial independence. While this trend predates the intensification of America as an industrialized society, the severity of this financial co-dependence on masculine persons became more evolved, and entrenched.<sup>2</sup>

The focus on Victorian-era marriage politics and economies establishes that many American women's historians cast aside the twentieth-century in favor of its more dynamic, more conceptualized predecessor. Perhaps, many historians view this era as part of their own life, rather than retaining their own histories. Hendrik Hartog gives a panorama of marriage dynamics during the middle of this century in his article "Marital Exits and Marital Expectations

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<sup>1</sup> Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, *Women, Work, and Family* (New York: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall Inc., 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

in Nineteenth Century America.” By underscoring the legal, social, and economic ramifications of marriage in the Antebellum/Victorian American setting, Hartog gives evidence for why marriage has manifested into the phenomenon it is today. More importantly, however, Hartog denotes that marriage transformed the man and woman into public entities of husband and wife, consecrating their image within the communal consciousness and converting their beings into a conjoined presence rather than a singular one. Under his definition, our perception of marriage, womanhood, and matrimonial legality is strengthened.<sup>3</sup> While these definitions of marriages in past social consciousness are important, what of those in our more recent history, and how, with so many vast studies on sociopolitical depictions, personal narratives, and legal discourse, can our current understanding of feminism and marriage in the twentieth-century become more focused and enhanced?

Stephanie Coontz, a prominent family historian, has delivered popular historiography with a nuanced, more refocused look at how marriage of recent history shapes the institution of our present time. In her monograph, *Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage*, she underscores how the social transformations of the nineteenth-century created these egregious roles of dichotomy between men and women. Women, in the 1950s, were forced to remain in the home, for example, because they had no legal rights to operate their own businesses without their husbands or apply for credit without intense legal scrutiny.<sup>4</sup> Coontz emphasizes that these were a result of chauvinist traditions that were forged in a sexist nineteenth and early twentieth-century.

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<sup>3</sup> Hendrik A. Hartog et al, “Marital Exits and Marital Expectations in Nineteenth Century America,” *University of Wisconsin Law School*, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960's*, (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 2-10.

By deconstructing historiography and precedents that kept women out of the work force and politics, but also outlined the ways in which women broke out of their assigned roles with the outbreak of both the sexual revolution and the second-wave feminist movement, a more concise prospect of marriage is painted.<sup>5</sup>

### **“THE GOLDEN AGE OF MARRIAGE”**

With the Allied victory in World War II and the rise of the United States to international military prominence, the return to normalcy was cherished and welcomed with open arms. After suffering a tremendous economic forfeiture with the advent of the Great Depression and the inconceivable chaos of the war, American society finally entered into an era of unprecedented prosperity as the nation progressed into the next half of the twentieth-century. With the end of the war in 1945, however, G.I.s and those who had been fighting on the Eurasian continent began to return home to find that diverging social parameters had arisen during this intense time of crisis. As a large majority of healthy, white men were drafted, and sent away to fight the Axis powers, women were forced to assume roles that differed from their previous social station. For example, many white women, who for the first time, were existing without a dominating masculine entity, made their way into the public sphere to work in military factories that produced ammunition, warheads, and helped to develop the naval armada vis-à-vis steel manufacturing.<sup>6</sup> However, some of these women began to work in white collar jobs that denoted

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<sup>5</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960's* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 2-10.

<sup>6</sup> Blanche Linden-Ward and Carol Hurd Green, *American Women in the 1960's: Changing the Future* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), 122-133.

collecting taxes, working as file clerks, secretaries, and even office machine operatives.<sup>7</sup> As women's time in these factories progressed and became a societal expectation, women began wearing pants, cutting their long hair short, and finding solidarity and community outside of the domestic plane. Women, tossing away their femininity to sufficiently help the war effort, embodied masculine roles once prohibited to them. Along with this, African-Americans in the post-Reconstruction era South were fleeing the racist socio-politics of Jim Crow legislation. With the mass exodus of disenfranchised African-Americans looking for steady work in Northern and Western factories, the American work force was comprised of those who were historically left out of many social privileges that white, heterosexual males unknowingly ascribed to throughout the entirety of American history; factories needed these oppressed laborers to avoid foreclosing and losing profits.<sup>8</sup>

With the return of white male G.I.s, however, the normalcy of power and expectations returned. Women were forced out of the workplace and African-Americans in these once desperate industries were replaced in favor of these white male veterans. For white women, the return to their domesticity and protection over the home was met with both confusion and discontent on the part of those who enjoyed their experiences in the workplace. With their adaptation of masculinity, autonomy over capital, and freedom to navigate both gendered stations, it is no surprise that latent restlessness began to stir. These sentiments of displeasure, however, were dismantled as white men began to control the public sphere once more; it is here

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<sup>7</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 124.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas C. Holt, *Children of Fire: A History of African Americans* (New York: D&M Publishers, Inc., 2010), 275-281.

where “The Golden Age of Marriage” manifested itself.<sup>9</sup> Women, who were once key individuals in the success of the American war machine, were now forced into the role of mother and housewife via de facto intuitions of male superiority.<sup>10</sup>

For women at the dawn of the 1950’s, marriage wasn’t just an agreement between two people who promised themselves to each other, however, neither was it the legal social contract bringing two entities into one as in the past.<sup>11</sup> Marriage during this epoch was a definition of separate duties that came together to raise a family. Marriage during this golden age was a woman’s primary role, nothing was more imperative than finding a husband and creating the perfect nuclear family, a family that placed the male patriarch at the top of the domestic hierarchy of a wife and two children. Marriage in this era put people in their place. For white, middle-class women especially, the notion of motherhood and loving housewife was the only way for a woman to find a fulfilling life. Therefore, a woman’s value was tied directly in her fertility, attractiveness, and “landing” a successful husband. As the notion of marriage became an important facet of American subculture once more, women were pressured into finding husbands and creating families, all the while hoping to remain docile and immaculate in the eyes of the public. This trend towards marriage is conceptualized when we discuss the statistics of the situation. With over 95% of the American populous eloping under defined legal precedents of the state, the social expectation denoted that a white, heterosexual, middle-class couple with two

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<sup>9</sup> Blanche Linden-Ward and Carol Hurd Green, *American Women in the 1960’s: Changing the Future* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Martha May, *Women’s Roles in Twentieth-Century America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2009), 15-22.

<sup>11</sup> Hendrik A. Hartog, “Marital Exits and Marital Expectations in Nineteenth Century America,” *University of Wisconsin Law School*, 1991.

children was key in finding happiness.<sup>12</sup> For men, this meant finding an economically fulfilling job to provide for his family and using his fertility and economic success of the masculine sphere to demonstrate that he was, in fact, an average American male. For females, on the other hand, the force feeding of marriage represented something more sinister. With their roles as the caring mother, they were also obligated to adhere to superficial standards of femininity, as well as, being unequal to their husbands. For example, *The Saturday Evening Post* recorded that “the man should be number one.”<sup>13</sup> Public sentiment denotes that men were seen to be the superior sex and women were left as the inferior, lesser beings; “A woman should not feel inferior by making her husband feel superior.” Women were not just wives, mothers, and daughters; they were the property of the male dominator in the form of a husband/father.<sup>14</sup>

Women in the domestic sphere during this period were the cooks, the cleaners, the optimistic motivators, and completely ignorant of politics, finances, and masculine duties. Furthermore, their positions as subservient beings allowed for these ideals of male superiority to take hold in a plethora of ways. For example, many sitcoms that arose during this decade, like *Leave It to Beaver* and *I Love Lucy*, demonstrate that the female should be beautiful, but ditzy, otherwise should be challenging the domination of her husband.<sup>15</sup> From vacuuming in high heels

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<sup>12</sup> Ed Behrend-Martinez (Professor of History) in discussion on feminism and marriage, September 2018.

<sup>13</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960's* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 1-10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Joyce Lubold, “My Love Affair with the Washing-Machine Man,” In *Women's Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press*, ed. Nancy A. Walker, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 189-193.

with the latest inventions of domestic housework to ensuring that their home was immaculate, and up to her husband's approval, women abided by a guide of superficiality and subservience.<sup>16</sup>

Women ascertained their own forms of professionalism to counterbalance the sexist treatment they received within the public sphere because many of them were unable to break into the public sphere due to these established societal norms.<sup>17</sup> Women found professionalism in the way that they kept up their homes and provided for their family; because many were barred from entering the public sphere via their husbands or social expectations, this domestic universe was forced to become the place where they showcased their learned skills. For example, these women would make the best dinners for their husbands, clean their homes with the newest of technologies, such as the in-home washer and dryer, and would overall, perfect the way that they took care of their homes and the aesthetics that were shown to their neighbors.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, domestic work became many women's bailiwick. If housewives could not enter the public sphere on their own accord, they would mirror the same professional expectations that their husbands endured in their careers. For example, women would ensure that the cakes they served for dessert were without flaw, the beds they made were without wrinkles, and most importantly, the house they cleaned was impeccable with no dust to be found. Domestic professionalism, when discussing wifely roles in the 1950's, was not only a means for women to exert a modicum of control over their lives, it also denoted true feminine fulfillment in the eyes of social

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<sup>16</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960's* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 1-10.

<sup>17</sup> Blanche Linden-Ward and Carol Hurd Green, *American Women in the 1960's: Changing the Future* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), xi-xvii.

<sup>18</sup> Peggy Orenstein, *Flux: Women on Sex, Work, Kids, Love, and in a Half-Changed World*, (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 113-116.

precedents. What's more to the picture is that many women during this decade of prosperity and sexism were happy to submit to their husbands.

For women that were in the workforce, their careers held nominal pay-offs and even less professional ascension. Furthermore, women who were forced to leave the domestic sphere to provide for their families, such as women of color, poor women, and single women, sexist discrimination was catalyzed with misogynistic expectations of women's bodies and superficial beauty. Take for example newspaper ads for jobs. While women were breaking into the public sphere during the final years of the 1950's, many of these jobs were only seeking "attractive" women to fulfil unrewarding careers. Ads targeted single and married women who were "cheerful" and "pretty-looking" while characterizing the female workforce with positions that had little to no opportunity to advance, such as, secretaries.<sup>19</sup> For men, however, a massive amount of prestigious job opportunities was offered in these newspapers that was exponentially more than the number of ads searching for women (in these ads, 231 were searching for accountants and chemists).<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the notion that these ads held male labor above that of his female counterpart as more valuable is demonstrated by the fact that none of these ads required the man to look or act in a certain fashion; it is here where one can see how these sexist institutions of marriage and labor intersect and paint a panorama of deep-seated misogyny within the social landscape of America at the precipice of change.

### **BETTY FRIEDAN AND *The Feminine Mystique***

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<sup>19</sup> Stephaine Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960's* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 9-15.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

With the advent of the 1960's, the notion that women were the inferior sex was an almost established truth among law makers, business owners, and even some women who viewed their role with passive grace and dignity. For many women hopeful for change in the new decade, the election of John F. Kennedy had promised unprecedented revolutions for women coveting a breakthrough of the dense glass ceiling. But, as the new president's "Camelot" administration began taking shape, women slowly realized that this president was not the great equalizer as promised to them. Within this administration, there were more men in cabinet positions than in the previous four administrations, and the president made no moves to issue proclamations that would assist these women in their quest for liberation and equality.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, contrary to the stereotype that the entirety of the 1960's was marked by dynamic changes and breakages to the sociopolitical order, the early years of the sixties were characterized by stagnant ideals that tried to keep women in the domestic sphere. With President Kennedy's reluctance to make waves in Congress, coupled with the tenacious conformity within American social life, the ideals of femininity, motherhood, and matrimony remained institutions almost detrimental to women's health. Furthermore, men still controlled the financial strength of women, husbands controlled their ability to ascertain relationships outside of the domestic sphere, but most importantly, before the advent of Women's Liberation, men were still the dominators that kept women from true autonomy, especially when considering the institution of marriage. The Kennedy administration did little to enable women to be more than homemakers and mothers, rather, this

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<sup>21</sup> Blanche Linden-Ward and Carol Hurd Green, *American Women in the 1960's: The Changing Future* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), 1-4.

presidential ministry kept alive the misogynistic status quo of its predecessors. Women were encouraged to remain subservient to their husbands.<sup>22</sup>

In 1963, an unlikely entity arose to challenge these rigid guidelines for women in their marriages. Perhaps one of the most important facets of the Women's Liberation Movement and the Sexual Revolution of the twentieth-century, the publishing and consumer synthesization of the novel *The Feminine Mystique* sparked a call for action among housewives. Written by an educated, middle-class, suburban woman, *The Feminine Mystique* underscored "the problem that has no name."<sup>23</sup> Many women, such as the author, Betty Friedan, felt these melancholies in their marriages. An incredible panorama of womanhood, and latent despair, *The Feminine Mystique* would move on to become the 1963 best seller.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the main objective of this novel was to express to women, especially white, middle-class, suburban housewives, that their marriages were largely giving power to their dominators and took away from the ability for women to engage in intellectual, social, and even political opportunities; higher thinking on the part of the housewife was discouraged.<sup>25</sup> While sex discrimination in the public sphere was beginning to be challenged in communal consciousness, the emphasis on emotional levels of extreme dissatisfaction of the housewife had never been discussed before so openly. Friedan wrote an intellectual book while also claiming the reader's emotional attention; millions of middle-class

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 5-7.

<sup>23</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1963), 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960's*, (New York: Basic Books, 2011), xv.

<sup>25</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1963), 3-20.

women understood where Friedan placed her criticism of marriage, femininity, and the notion that women were somehow biologically inclined to remain mothers and homemakers.<sup>26</sup>

With the publication of her novel, and the rearing of its unique, sometimes brutal criticisms to the consciousness of the individual woman, Friedan allowed women to question, and eventually, re-examine their positions as the subservient gender. The individualistic inquiry into the reasons behind their dissatisfaction, womanhood, and even marriage allowed for women to parrot the burning question Friedan had so eloquently provided, “is this all?” With this concise utterance, Friedan engaged the second-wave feminist movement in a way that brought unheralded inequalities to the forefront of feminine cognizance. In her chapter, “A Passionate Journey,” Friedan denotes that feminism would ignite a liberation movement that would forever alter the discourse about women’s roles, entitlement to work, but most importantly, Friedan exposed that women were more than just idle housewives; Friedan had the revolutionary understanding that women were people.<sup>27</sup> With the publication of this groundbreaking novel, women were left with the sensation that accepting their position as the docile mother with an unsullied innocence about her was no longer going to hold sway. Perhaps one of the most important pieces of literature published on women’s roles within the sociopolitical context of the early 1960’s, Friedan’s novel is hugely significant in spreading the message of empowerment to women across geopolitical contexts. Women in Kansas were having the same dissatisfactions within their individual lives that women in California felt.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and the American Woman at the Dawn of the 1960’s* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 21.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 5-25.

<sup>28</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the Twentieth-Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 19-21.

Moreover, Friedan's message of empowerment and corrosive feminine idleness allowed for those engaging in her novel to begin placing blames on masculine domination rather than on their own personal failures. Since the rise of the "golden age of marriage," unsatisfied women positioned their latent unhappiness in their own personal failures. Be it as a mother, as a wife, or as a female in general, women during the entirety of the 1950's were charged for the responsibility of their own melancholy.<sup>29</sup> A major component of a women's biology and social significance was to remain the perfect wife and mother. If a woman could not find happiness in these internal institutions of domestic labor and family, she must be at fault; was marriage and motherhood not enough for these selfish matriarchs? Friedan, and her comprehensive novel, shattered these expectations of victim-blaming and pointed the finger of accusation to how society places women, especially college-educated women, in positions where their intellectual stimuli and prowess remained vacant and unimportant. Rather than chastise women for unhappiness and despair, the blame must be cast to those who refuse to allow women to express their intellect and opinions; marriage cannot be all for this demographic group because men are not expected to abide by the same standards. Most significantly, if men need careers, family, religion, and social avenues to experience a plentiful, harmonious life, why were women only expected to aspire to one facet of this puzzle?<sup>30</sup> Friedan, pulling narratives from housewives across the country, demonstrated that this was not a phenomenon on the individual level, rather,

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 21-24.

<sup>30</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960's* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 24-34.

it was blatant misogyny and patriarchal despotism that kept housewives from achieving happiness outside of the home.

Rather than “feeling lucky” when female college graduates are married right away, women should aspire to finding themselves via their intellect.<sup>31</sup> When Betty Friedan won a graduate fellowship following the completion of her undergraduate program at Smith College in 1942, she felt a wave of unease as her mind began overwhelming her psyche with pressing questions like “is this really what I want to be,” and “is this what my future holds in store for me?”<sup>32</sup> Friedan had never imagined her life after college, rather, she was only certain that she could not return to the life of her mother. Deciding to engage in the endeavor and accept the fellowship, Friedan continued to have bombarding doubts about her future and her chosen career path. When a close male friend on Berkeley’s campus buttressed the statement “Nothing can come of this between us. I’ll never win a fellowship like yours,” Friedan began to reconsider her psychology aspirations and eventually dropped out of graduate school, choosing to marry and have children instead. It is narratives such as Friedan’s own, and many other female graduates at Smith College more than a decade later, that the exposure of how sexist expectations of marriage and women began to settle in the individual consciousness.<sup>33</sup>

When observing these fears of matrimony and womanhood, we see that many of these women never used their education to obtain high-ranking careers like their male counterparts. Rather, these women settle for marriage and childbirth. The second-wave feminist movement,

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<sup>31</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1963), 12-25.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 12-15.

coupled with Friedan's sentiments in *The Feminine Mystique*, underscored that women were cognizant of the fact that there was more to life than marriage, however, the notion that they could have a fulfilling life without these marriages seemed to be a farce; it is here where feminists set the grounds for the break away from these archaic traditions of femininity and gender assignments. Why should women be expected to aspire to marriage when men were not scrutinized under these same standards? Friedan's investigation into these intellectual forfeitures on behalf of women demonstrate that there were key issues in how we valued women's roles in comparison to their male counterparts. Men could navigate this collegiate system and have little to no paranoia concerning their future careers and placements in socioeconomic life. Women during this epoch of matrimonial scramble were not so lucky because they were creatures that were predestined to become mothers and child bearers; their intellectual prowess and merits meant nothing if they couldn't fulfill the ultimate role of a woman.<sup>34</sup>

*The Feminine Mystique* is a quintessential entity that helped launch the second-wave feminist movement because it allowed housewives to both come together under the umbrella of "the problem that has no name" while also re-examining their own status in their marriages at the introspective level.<sup>35</sup> Unlike many sects of the first-wave feminist movement, this newly-developed, second-wave liberation front blossoms with Friedan publishing this punitive criticism of modern matrimony because it was activated at the grassroots level.<sup>36</sup> More

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<sup>34</sup> Peggy Orenstein, *Flux: Women on Sex, Work, Kids, Love, and Life in a Half-Changed World* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 116-120.

<sup>35</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1963), 15-36.

<sup>36</sup> Allison M. Parker, "The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848: A Pivotal Moment in Nineteenth-Century America," *The John Hopkins University Press*, no. 3 (2008), 341.

specifically, while the first-wave feminist movement used organized, planned gatherings of disenfranchised and engaged women, such as the Seneca Falls Conference of 1848, the movement sparked in the sixties permeated female minds in a different manner. By enticing women to scrutinize their own existences through literature and engaging women who were trapped in their homes, feeling the heavy weights of dissatisfaction due to an unfulfilling, nuptial “partnership,” Friedan unlocked women’s disenfranchisement in a patriarchal system that separated and forced women to compete against one another.<sup>37</sup> At a very young age, around 20 years and younger, women were expected to find a handsome, good man that would provide them with economic security as well as the most important facet to the womanhood concept: children. With the publishing of *The Feminine Mystique*, American society, and consequently the institution of marriage, was slowly becoming redefined.

The second-wave feminist movement, as it evolved into the massive force following 1965, was a movement that set itself apart from its predecessor by preaching differing tenants of womanhood and justice.<sup>38</sup> With this new wave of female liberation, women would place emphasis on how females should be in control of their own sexual, matrimonial, and individual destinies rather than have them defined by the pretense of a man. Moreover, feminists like Gloria Steinem would call to end workplace discrimination to allow women a more equalized playing field with their male counterparts.<sup>39</sup> This emphasis on women’s individualistic needs

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<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Myette Coughlin and C. E. Coughlin, “Convention in Petticoats: The Seneca Falls Declaration of Woman’s Rights.” *Today’s Speech* 21 (Fall 1973): 17–23.

<sup>38</sup> Blanche Linden-Ward and Carol Hurd Green, *American Women in the 1960’s: Changing the Future* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), 368-374.

<sup>39</sup> Gloria Steinem, “Women and Power.” *New York Magazine*, December 1963.

stems from a change in social consciousness and acceptance, not so much political action and a push for legislation like in the feminist movement of the past, however, legislation and political change were imperative to its success. Without the tenants of the first-wave feminist movement guiding the crusade to change, the second-wave movement would have failed in its endeavor to reevaluate patriarchal institutions, such as marriage. With the conglomeration of the second-wave campaign, and the pressing for women to obtain a higher education, females synthesizing feminist texts, such as Friedan's novel, found solace in a movement that would propel them to break apart from the shackles of toxic matrimony and allow them to explore their unexplored potential.

While it is important to note that the publishing of Friedan's novel did not single-handedly jumpstart the call for sexual, economic, and political equality amongst the sexes, it is imperative to impress the concept that Friedan's theories and ideals opened the floodgates for women yearning for more than just marriage and children.<sup>40</sup> Marriage transformed in the decades between the Kennedy administration and the election of Ronald Regan because women began questioning their roles and began fighting against the system that had historically suppressed their voices. More importantly, women began vying for equality because their marriages were unfulfilling. For example, Friedan exposed women to Abraham Maslow's theory of the 'hierarchy of needs,' relaying to her audience that there is more to life and personal satisfaction than just having a roof over one's head and enough food on the table; individuals needed intellectual challenges to achieve proportionate happiness. Women should be demanding

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<sup>40</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960's*, (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 141-147.

sexual satisfaction, matrimonial partnership, and, most importantly, women should be demanding growth from an expansive world view that could not be sustained solely in the domestic plane.<sup>41</sup>

In a letter to Friedan, one housewife, who is left anonymous, denoted that while her children were “a delicious big part” of her world, they could not be “her entire world,” because, in an increasingly globalized theater where men can split an atom, or launch people into the atmosphere, marriage could not be the exemplary ending in the chapter of a housewife’s narrative, which again poses Friedan’s pressing question, “is this all?”<sup>42</sup> Wives reading *The Feminine Mystique* overwhelmingly related to Friedan’s sentiments of power, inequality, and above all, the unorthodox conception that there was more to life than simply marriage.

### **A CHANGING AMERICA**

While Friedan’s novel characterized a metamorphosis in the lives of women, especially white housewives by illustrating latent despair, the American sociopolitical system remained incredibly misogynistic and noxious for women. The entrance of *The Feminine Mystique* onto the American social landscape demonstrated that women were not simply biologically hardwired to serve as mothers and wives. Marriage and sex were becoming institutions of feminist examination that would crystalize into pillars of differing feminist sects, such as, radical and liberal feminism. The introduction of the birth control pill in 1960 divulges these distinctions that prevented women from obtaining equality within the domestic sphere. Developed by Margret Sanger three years before the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, the contraceptive

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<sup>41</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960’s*, (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 23-27.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 30-32.

revolution was firmly attached to the need for women to take control of their marriages and more importantly, their individual autonomy.<sup>43</sup>

While the production and research of the oral contraceptive, named Enovid, began development in the 1951 with the first invention of the tablet by Sanger, we must attribute the birth control pill's success to its impact on marriages in the 1960's and onward because it represents another cataclysmic shift in feminist discourse, an actual choice in managing their bodies and fertility<sup>44</sup>. Women were not, and could not be, the immaculate virginal archetypes that the patriarchy predetermined them to exude. Rather, women, following the release of the pill to the public, were now able to freely engage in patterns that had been developing since the 1920's.<sup>45</sup> The introduction of this pill into the female consciousness cannot be understated as a historical phenomenon because, with its hormonal balancing act, women were now able to control when, and if, they would begin a family with their husbands. Furthermore, single women in charge of their sexuality were now able to engage in safe sex practices without the fear of pregnancy that would result in an illegitimate child.<sup>46</sup>

An almost immediate backlash to this contraceptive manifested itself in 1965. One major court case arises because of these archaic definitions of marriage and monogamy, *Griswold v.*

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<sup>43</sup> Finn Christensen, "The Pill and Partnerships: The Impact of the Birth Control Pill on Cohabitation." *Journal of Population Economics* 25, no. 1 (2012): 29-52.

<sup>44</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: How Love Conquered Marriage*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 253-257.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

Connecticut.<sup>47</sup> An established legal precedent cemented under the Comstock Act of 1873, these legal acts prohibited any individual to use any type of medical conduit to delay or prevent pregnancy. While these laws had been challenged in the past, such as the case with *Tileston v. Ullman* in 1943, it wasn't until 1965 that this piece of misogynistic legislation was overturned.<sup>48</sup> Working as the executive director of the Planned Parenthood League of Connecticut, Estelle Griswold won her case because she convinced the court that trying to regulate a married couple's intimate affairs, such as contraception, were none of the court's business. Griswold used the first, eighth, and fourteenth amendment to her advantage because she cited that the court could not trample on the individual liberties of a citizen without due process of the law, could not intrude on the private practices of liberties, and no officer of the law could forcibly search a home without proper warrants.<sup>49</sup> The manipulation of these amendments allowed for this outdated law to become omitted. Consequently, the notion that every marriage had a right to "privacy" set the stage for a cataclysmic explosion regarding the future of marriage. For example, the entire institution of monogamy fell under scrutiny because, for couples wishing to engage in non-monogamous relationships, which were still illegal after this ruling, demonstrates how far feminism and activists alike had to reach to liberate sexuality.<sup>50</sup> While the pill does

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<sup>47</sup> Barbra Schierman, "Introduction: *Griswold v. Connecticut*." *Connecticut History Review* 54, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 256–60.

<sup>48</sup> David J. Garrow, "How *Roe v. Wade* Was Written." *Washington & Lee Law Review* 71, (2004): 893–924.

<sup>49</sup> Barbra Schierman, "Introduction: *Griswold v. Connecticut*." *Connecticut History Review* 54, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 256–60.

<sup>50</sup> Eir-Anne Edgar, "Suburban Subversions: Swingers and the Sexual Revolution." *Sexuality & Culture* 21, no. 2 (June 2017): 404–22.

indicate the reigns of sexual control were becoming loosened, the inability for non-married, non-heterosexual, or even, non-monogamous individuals to act sexually demonstrates that misogyny was still holding sway. The effects of the state's control over their bodies and sexualities; heteronormativity and 'vanilla' sexual ideals remained steadfast.

With the introduction of Sanger's birth control pill, and its established legality within the Supreme Court, the presentation of family planning and sexual freedom began to develop within households and marriages across the country. In fact, by 1970, 60% of all women, single or otherwise, were prescribed this revolutionary pill.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the notion of the contraceptive revolution is perhaps one of the most important doctrines that helped to promote women's liberation and the second-wave feminist movement as whole. Going against the stereotype that the sexual revolution of the late sixties ushered in an era of sexual promiscuity and freedom began with the release of Sanger's pill; the contraceptive revolution became the embodiment of autonomy. Historians, such as Coontz, have denoted that women had engaged in premarital sex since the dawn of the 1920's.<sup>52</sup> This important facet of historical circumstance must be highlighted explicitly because women were engaging in a "transitional sexual standard."<sup>53</sup> There is an incredible difference between the sexual revolution underscored by sex radicals of the first-wave feminist movement and the contraceptive revolution brought on by feminism in the 1960's. With one, sexuality should become freely expressed, and with the other, sexuality should become a woman's ability to control her body and future, opening the doors to sexual

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<sup>51</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 254-262.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

independence and an increase in female sexual satisfaction. However, it is the mixture of both entities working in tandem that the modern notion of femininity and sexuality develop. It is because of this contraceptive revolution, spearheaded by Sanger's pill, that feminist discourse saw an explosion in possibilities. Because women in science were pushing the boundaries for female autonomy, and women in academia were questioning archaic traditions of gender subservience, the second-wave feminist movement began redefining marriage, sex, and power. The women who were producing these entities of liberation and empowerment precisely relay to the pillars of this nuanced, grassroots movement.

If a woman in 1970 were to look back at a woman in the 1950's, a different picture of femininity would be painted. For females coming of age amid the social uprisings of the 1960's, sex became a point of empowerment that many women dedicated themselves to furthering, and, the generational gap between mothers and daughters depicted a dynamical restructuring of gender stations. Sex, in this instance, represented a monumental shift in how women related with men, their husbands, society, and even their mothers. Take for example, sex in the 1950's. Single women and teenage girls would engage in sexual acts with their boyfriends only if they were "in love" with them.<sup>54</sup> For men, this trend was even more acceptable as singles-culture and masculine libido became more customary. Men could have multiple sexual partners within their lifetime without feeling society's stinging backlash. This trend is most evident with the advent of *Playboy* and Hugh Hefner in 1953, with the first issue of his pornographic magazine titled "Miss Gold-Digger of 1953."<sup>55</sup> As a response to male family responsibilities, men, under

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Hefner's guidance, were encouraged to engage in heterosexual acts with females without becoming emotionally involved with them; it is here where we see male sexuality becoming more freelance while women were forced to bury their sexual conquests under the blanket of love and emotion by reacting to men claiming their own sexualities and exposing how these misogynistic standards impacted the women who were engaging in sex.<sup>56</sup> With the introduction of Sanger's pill, however, contraception now offered women a means to convene with sexual partners without the fear of pregnancy, however, it was the feminist movement of the 1960's that encouraged women to take control of their sexual autonomy just as their male counterparts had been doing for a decade. Moreover, feminist texts, such as Steinem's "A Bunny's Tale" demonstrates that women were no longer going to be taken advantage of, as well as exposing the misogynistic double-standards of American attitudes towards sexuality.<sup>57</sup>

Sex and sexuality quickly became a benchmark of feminism within the 1960's and 1970's. As the popularity of Evnovid became more steadfast with the progression of the sixties, married women were beginning to demand the same sexual satisfaction that their husbands obtained. With this newly realized sexual freedom, along with the expectation of sexual gratification, couples needed to reconsider their sensual responsibilities toward their partners. One development that demonstrates this reality comes from the creation of open marriages, "swingers," and "key parties."<sup>58</sup> As the ruling on the 1965 Supreme Court case, *Griswold v.*

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<sup>56</sup> Gloria Steinem, "A Bunny's Tale," *Show Magazine*, May 1963.

<sup>57</sup> Eir-Anne Edgar, "Suburban Subversions: Swingers and the Sexual Revolution." *Sexuality & Culture* 21, no. 2 (June 2017): 404–22.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

Connecticut denoted, “marital privacy” was only reserved for those in a committed, monogamous relationship recognized by the state.<sup>59</sup> However, with the new waves of feminism bombarding established sexual norms, marriages were forced to adapt to these changing institutions. As women began vying for sexual satisfaction, couples began engaging in swinger relationships where they would have sexual intercourse with other swinger couples. In turn, over 8 million couples had broken out of the typical monogamous relationship to understand both themselves and their partners on a deeper level in the 1970’s.<sup>60</sup> Swinger relationships denote the ways in which sexual liberty has become more entrenched in the mindsets of millions of couples around the world, however, it also denotes that because this practice was so controversial in the minds of the American public, these sexual relationships were often kept from the public view. Moreover, sexuality during this transformative era redefined how married couples related to one another.

With the emergence of the contraceptive revolution, spearheaded by the birth control pill, women engaged in family planning that would alter the institution of marriage forever. As more young women were prescribed Enovid, the birth rates fell to historic lows, causing more women to remain single. As ladies refused to give up their early twenties to engage in marriage, America saw an increase in the number of women joining matrimonial institutions in their late twenties. Whereas the 1950’s pressured women to elope as soon as possible, feminist sentiment in the 1960’s, coupled with changing expectations in women’s labor, pushed back the average

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

age of marriage.<sup>61</sup> Consequently, the decreased rates of marriages in young women also decreased the rate at which children were born. With this falling status of childbirth, the entire conception of marriage, parenthood, and women's roles were beginning to become redefined and re-examined under a more scrutinized feminist lens. If children were now an optional proponent of matrimony, why should individuals, whether they be male or female, rush into an ill-advised partnership under the law?<sup>62</sup> Moreover, with more women questioning their status as the domestic protector due to Friedan's work, mixed with the availability to delay pregnancy and recreational sex from singles cultures, traditional justifications of marriage and spousal roles were beginning to wane.

With the passage of the Equal Pay Act of 1963, coupled with the availability of safe contraception, women began pushing marriage and motherhood to the backburner of their minds in favor of pursuing prestigious careers and education.<sup>63</sup> On paper, this new Civil Rights Act set out to eradicate workplace discrimination on all bases, however, realistic political action would not be taken until the 1970's. It is here where marriage begins to falter and transform in terms of its chokehold over the American populace.<sup>64</sup> As aforementioned, more women were pushing back marriage and pregnancy to secure careers and obtain education, however, we see that marriage begins transitioning from the head-component model of matrimony to a junior

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<sup>61</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 254-255.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

partner/senior partner system of marriage.<sup>65</sup> Within this head-component model, we see that one stable income is sufficient to provide for the entire household and this single income has historically been represented as patriarchal earnings within the public sphere. The other spouse, normally the matriarch, is to watch over the domestic plane. With the junior partner/senior partner system of marriage, however, we see a change in this dichotomy of income. In this new system, both members are engaged in a domestic partnership, a concept that was almost non-existent before the advent of 1960's feminism. Moreover, while one member is the breadwinner and the other makes disposable income for the family, the wife is still seen as having a less important income. Before this transition, marriage was not a partnership, rather, it was a division of labor that separated gendered roles. With this new model emerging as feminism became more prominent, the emphasis on partnership and equality was substantial.<sup>66</sup>

As the 1960's transitioned into the 1970's, the women's movement had reached national acclaim. Those ascribing to the institutions of feminism, along with those fighting against these progresses, demonstrate that marriage, sex, and power were undergoing systematic changes. Marriage, once dominating, heteronormative relationship between men and women, was transforming into an institution of collective partnership and equal opportunity. While women's income in the workforce was still seen as subservient, this second-wave feminist movement helped to promote equality in marriage that was once disregarded as unnecessary. Moreover, as sex repositioned itself to the forefront of feminist discourse, especially after 1965, marriage was forced to transform into an institution that gave women more power.

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<sup>65</sup> Susan M. Shaw and Janet Lee, *Women's Voices and Feminist Visions* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2015), 448-450.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

### **FACTIONAL FEMINISM**

Socioeconomic gains made by individual women across American subcultures, due to the advent of feminism in the sixties and seventies, allowed women to redefine their sexual and domestic partnerships with their husbands. While women were making advances into the public sphere and, with a barrage of new legislation like Title IX of the Educational Act in 1972, *Roe v Wade* in 1973, and an increase in unilateral divorces, made legal by state governments, women were becoming more self-confident in their work outside of the home.<sup>67</sup> Because of the sexist limitations placed on women within the work force, the second-wave feminist movement forced businesses and state governments alike to alter their parameters, giving women a chance to permeate into the public sphere at even more rapid rates. Women, now with a modicum of control over pregnancy and ability to access the labor force, competed with their male counterparts on an almost 'equal' playing field. More importantly, these women could choose when and if they wanted to enter a marriage as more women were choosing to reject early, ill-advised eloping.

Feminists, such as Friedan, used grassroots organizations to give women a political voice in a system where their opinions were devalued. The establishment of the National Organization of Women (NOW) in 1966, demonstrates that tenants from the first-wave feminist movement were pouring into the discussion of how women synthesized their role in the political spectrum.<sup>68</sup> Because the first barrage of feminism used political action, protests, and academic texts to create

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<sup>67</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 254-262.

<sup>68</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 293-295.

change, the burgeoning feminist movement in the second half the twentieth-century began with this same discourse.<sup>69</sup> With organizations like NOW, which committed itself to obtaining full legal equality through litigation and political action, early feminism of the second-wave fought for the rights of women by challenging discrimination in the work place and legislation that prevented women from realizing equality.<sup>70</sup> Later known as liberal feminism, this sect of feminist dialogue debated for equal pay, equal representation, education, and the ability for women to control their bodies, whether it was through pregnancy, abortion, or through contraceptives.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, this pillar of feminism, which laid dormant for over 50 years, was the first major litigation that promoted women's empowerment. Regarding marriage, feminists identifying with liberal feminism preached that wives should be regarded as completely equal in all facets of daily life. For example, women should be able to exit the domestic sphere and find fulfilling jobs equitable with their spouse, women needed to be compensated fair, and women needed to push for these equalities to emerge in their own lives.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, with the introduction of liberalized womanhood in the public sphere, these feminists fought for increased government childcare facilities, permitting these women to focus on their careers rather than devoting their time to managing children.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Susan M. Shaw and Janet Lee, *Women's Voices and Feminist Visions* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2015), 4-10.

<sup>71</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brance Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 293-295.

<sup>72</sup> National Organization of Women, "About the Now Foundation," NOW.org.

<sup>73</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brance Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 293-295.

With the emphasis on legislation, singular introspection, and women's labor, liberal feminism created the dialogue that would catalyze the movement for women to become equal. With the reintroduction of the Equal Rights Amendment in 1971 by liberal feminist and politician, Martha Griffiths, we can see how liberal feminism impacted the American sociopolitical landscape.<sup>74</sup> Originally crafted by Alice Paul in 1921, the ERA is a document that would promote equality in all sects of life.<sup>75</sup> Whether it be political, social, economic, or sexual, this hopeful amendment to the United States Constitution would rectify the wrongs of gender inequality by placing everyone on an equal foothold; men and women, in theory, would be awarded the same opportunities, salaries, and treatment under the law. With this new constitutional amendment, sameness, regarding legal treatment, would intersect with equality between the sexes. The liberal feminist tenant that presented the ERA to Congress hoped to rectify inequalities all women felt in their daily lives.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, while this legislation failed to pass the deadline of ratification in 1982, it represents an incredible triumph for feminists attacking social standards that refused to treat women with dignity.<sup>77</sup>

With the rise in popularity of this feminist sect, however, brought on a barrage of criticism from a wide range of groups believing these beliefs to be one-sided to the experiences of women who would not benefit from the triumphs of liberalized feminist discourse. While

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<sup>74</sup> Karma Chávez, Yasmin Nair, and Ryan Conrad, "Equality, Sameness, Difference: Revisiting the Equal Rights Amendment," no. 3 (2015): 272.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 341-342.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

white women were benefiting from the advantages of political dynamisms, women of color, women who existed outside of the heteronormative plane, and women left out of traditional Caucasian privileges were often ignored and repressed. It is here where feminism began breaking into factions with their own unique agendas.<sup>78</sup> For example, one of the largest opponents of liberal feminism does not come from the expected antifeminist ideology, rather, comes from radicalized feminism that developed as the sixties transitioned into the seventies. Moreover, while radical feminism had existed since the first-wave movement, as is the case with anarchist feminists and anti-marriage feminists like Emma Goldman, as demonstrated in her essay “Marriage and Love,” the conglomeration of this second barrage of liberation relied on these differing viewpoints to redefine marriage and power.<sup>79</sup> Radical feminism, as outlined in Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* in 1970, was not content with simply gaining legislation that would allow women to become equal to men. These feminists preached that because the system of American sociopolitics, and consequently, everyday life, was so deeply-rooted in patriarchal oppression that women would always remain subservient.

With an emphasis on sexual inequality, radical feminists alleged that legislation, litigation, and individual restructuring of gender expectations could never transform the sexist system because it was so deeply-rooted in misogyny and male superiority. Moreover, in

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<sup>78</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 290-297.

<sup>79</sup> Emma Goldman, “Marriage and Love,” in *Women’s Voices and Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 6th edition. Susan M. Shaw and Janet Lee (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2015), 452-454.

Firestones' novel, she outlines that women and children within the patrilineal family unit are beings of oppression that capitalism has placed at the bottom of the sexual hierarchy. Marriage, according to Firestone, turns sexual love into a tool of oppression because it keeps women from reaching economic equality and from achieving true liberty; men cannot love women while also respecting them because of the Oedipus complex. Furthermore, only with the disestablishment of the known family system, the destruction of gender categories based on sex, and elimination of capitalism, can true sexual equality evolve.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, radicalized feminists emerging during this era of social stratification hated the family system and the institution of heterosexual matrimony because it not only disadvantaged women who did not fit into its parameters, it also left women at the bottom of the social hierarchy. It's fitting for this nuanced, feminist ideology that many of these women proclaiming themselves as "radical feminists" had ties to socialism and communism.<sup>81</sup> These women, who were often very wary of men, rejected them from entering their groups, and often had no single leader in charge of organization; they used a participatory democracy to maintain a modicum of inclusion because many of radical feminism's followers were college educated. Moreover, radical feminism is an important facet to examine when studying the changes to marriage during this time because it has so many connections to other movements. For example, radical feminism, born in 1967, evolved into the massive historical force because of its ability to draw together feminists from the anti-war movement, the Civil Rights movement, and the Free Speech movement at Berkeley.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, the

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<sup>80</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 303-304.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

augmentations to marriage, under this umbrella of radicalized women, were explosive because these women preached that if a woman wanted to work, they should just forgo the entire institution of marriage as whole.<sup>83</sup>

The institution of marriage transformed as feminism underwent steady breakages. One of the most important notions of matrimonial criticism comes from the growing lesbian movement that fought to redefine feminine roles and expected heteronormative predispositions. Before the popularity of this movement grew with the outbreak of the Stonewall Riots in 1969, compulsory heterosexuality was not only a social expectation, it was a legal obligation; abstaining from heterosexual intercourse and marriage left homosexual women alienated, unequal, and often, criminalized for their homoerotic behaviors.<sup>84</sup> Because lesbian women, especially lesbians of color, were so often left out of the narrative of white feminism, they were forced to commence their own forms of protest to the systematic barriers keeping them from becoming equal citizens. More specifically, lesbian woman, if their sexual activities were discovered, would lose their homes, jobs, and face social ostracism.<sup>85</sup> For lesbian activists emerging during this time, men, and the patrilineal system which they created, were the ultimate form of oppression and control that kept women from achieving equality under the law and in their personal lives. The notion of the heterosexual relationship, along with the parameters which forced women to work twice as

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 256-257.

<sup>85</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brance Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 314-317.

hard in the public sphere for half the pay, left lesbian women disenfranchised and discontent. Lesbian women, combined with their critiques to the institution of marriage, exemplify how marriage was evolving within a society that once cast these women to the side and criminalized romantic and sexual behavior they had no control over.<sup>86</sup> With the modifying sociopolitical setting of the late sixties and early seventies, the LGBT community now had a voice in pressuring lawmakers to modify the considerations of matrimony. Whereas two decades before the arrival of lesbian feminism, homosexual couples were forced to retreat underground to avoid social ousting and indictment, the new wave of domestic change allowed marriage to begin considering homosexual couples equal to their heterosexual counterparts.<sup>87</sup>

For women of color, their own marriages were often left out of the dialogue, just as lesbian women were. With the rise of the Civil Rights Movement in the late fifties, onward, black women were historically left out of the decision-making and leadership positions that allowed for the advancement of the black community. Take for example, Stokely Carmichael and Ruby Doris Smith Robinson's paper titled "The Position of Women in SNCC." While Smith Robinson was a huge advocate for the liberation of black Americans from the chains of Jim Crow and indoctrinated racism that disenfranchised their community, blatant sexism still prohibited women like her from engaging in the higher echelons of the movement. Carmichael told Smith Robinson that her sole duty within the Civil Rights Movement was to cook, clean, and remain the "sexual supply" for the men in the movement. This notion demonstrates that black

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 256-257.

women, the most disenfranchised demographic in the American social hierarchy, had differing notions of inequality and its impacts, especially with men and marriage.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, black women, as individuals, who faced both racism and sexism as a combined entity, were forced to introduce their own forms of societal resistance. For example, with the publication of Friedan's novel, *The Feminine Mystique*, many middle-class, white women felt inspired, and motivated, to change their relationships with their husbands; this was not the case with many black women. Because many black households were lower on the socioeconomic spectrum, black matriarchs were forced to enter the public sphere and work in blue-collar jobs.<sup>89</sup> Working as a mother and full-time laborer, black women had no time to consider their positions within the grand scheme of inequality and sexism. Moreover, racism still held a stronger chokehold on these women's individual ability to maintain safety, security, and happiness; sexism in this sense was almost placed on the backburner of the black mother's narrative.<sup>90</sup>

When analyzing the quote "Some of those women's lib girls are asking for jobs that black men haven't been able to get," we see that the black community during this time was wary of feminism because it did disregard women of color and alienated their husbands who were put off by feminist discourse.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, black feminism was forced to augment into an institution that

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<sup>88</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 314-317.

<sup>89</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960's* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 139-146.

<sup>90</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 314-317.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

heralded both the pillars of white feminism and black liberation. With the combination of both, black feminists, often depicting themselves as radicals because they were victims of racist class institutions, transformed into a nationwide phenomenon.<sup>92</sup> Take for example the opening of the National Black Feminist Organization in 1973 in New York. With the opening of this organization, and its subsequent expansion vis a vis multiple chapters across America, demonstrated that the feminist movement, once composed of many white women with white interests, had evolved into a conglomeration of women with a multifaceted set of ideals, beliefs, and proponents.<sup>93</sup>

### **ANTIFEMINIST BACKLASH**

With the increase in women's autonomy outside of the home, coupled with the rise in marital rights, racial equality, and sexual liberation, females were experiencing freedom and emancipations that were prohibited to them before the advent of 1963. Marriages across the country were augmenting in a response to these changes in women's responsibilities, both in and outside of the home. Take for example, the revolution of the "no-fault" divorce within this era of social stratification.<sup>94</sup> With the legalization of unilateral or, no fault divorces, in the seventies, one in three marriages would fail. However, according to historian Stephanie Coontz, this is a result of both feminism working to secure women's place in the workforce just as much as it is

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<sup>92</sup> John P. Bowles, "'Acting like a Man': Adrian Piper's Mythic Being and Black Feminism in the 1970s." *Signs*, no. 3 (2007): 621.

<sup>93</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 314-317.

<sup>94</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 254-262.

the widespread dissatisfaction with matrimony as a whole. While these trends in divorce rates were substantial, and found their roots in the early sixties, it's more important to note that it was because feminism had changed marriage by spreading these litigations of unilateral divorce to states that would otherwise loosen their resolve.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, marriage, a social institution, was also losing its foothold in the grand scheme of the individual consciousness; less people were rushing to get married and producing offspring. We see that feminism, no matter the pillar one researched, was redefining how men and women interacted as a family unit.

While some viewed these dynamic changes to matrimony as incredibly positive and required for the liberation of women, such as Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem, an intense backlash manifested itself to counterbalance the feminist agenda. When discussing the feminist movement, one must turn to look at its opponent as well. As feminism, especially liberal feminism, progressively gained acclaim, the antifeminist movement followed suit with the same fierceness in political rallying. Antifeminists, as a collective movement, did not act within the political theater, rather, they reacted to feminist dialogue and pushed their agendas to counteract feminist victories. Take for example the success of the court case *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. Contextually, illegal, and unsafe, abortions by 1970 had reached a historic high of up to 1,200,000 women going outside of the law to terminate their pregnancies.<sup>96</sup> With these astounding numbers, it's clear to see why feminists from all sects were pressuring lawmakers to loosen their stance on the abortion debate. If one of the major tenants of the second-wave feminist movement was to protect women, and their bodies, from the patriarchal system, then the

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

notion that unsafe, illegal abortions being performed in the modernized world was mind-blowing. Women deserved these protections of their bodies because they were not just baby making machines.<sup>97</sup>

While the contraception revolution allowed women to plan or delay pregnancy in their sexual primes, what of those women who succumbed to pregnancy despite these precautions, such as rape? The entrance of *Roe v Wade* onto the American social landscape polarized the American populace. Moreover, with its successful passing in the Supreme Court in 1973 under the notion that blocking legal abortion violated rights of privacy, the social scene in America split even further.<sup>98</sup> When examining how women's liberation movement allowed for the passage of this historic gain in women's autonomy, it must be determined that women could now fully decide on their own versions of family planning. Even if a female had become pregnant, no matter the context, she could terminate the pregnancy in the first-trimester to maintain her childless life. For families, this meant that if a husband and wife were not economically ready to support children, they no longer had to worry if the wife became pregnant, thus, redefining the entire institution of how husband and wife juggled their roles as partners. Furthermore, with this increase in the intensity of family planning, obvious resistance stemmed from Christian

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<sup>97</sup> Susan M. Shaw and Janet Lee, *Women's Voices and Feminist Visions* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2015), 4-9.

<sup>98</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 228-232.

fundamentalists believing abortion to be an attack on family, Christian sacraments, and the moral fabric of America.<sup>99</sup>

One activist was anticommunist leader turned republican motivator, Phyllis Schlafly. Under her guidance, the antifeminist movement could blossom into dynamite force that eventually led to the conservative resurgence of the Reagan-era, the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment in Congress in 1982, and the dissipation of feminist tenants that had been practiced for the last two decades. Furthermore, a focused lens must be cast on Schlafly's involvement in the antifeminist movement because she ultimately became the personification of traditional, feminine ideals and behaviors. As a mother herself, Schlafly represented a set of Republican values that told traditional women, put off by the feminist movement, that they did not have to succumb to these unnatural changes in women's roles or stand for the 'falling' standards of the marital institution.<sup>100</sup> Take for example, the stance that Schlafly, Anita Bryant, and other traditional, homophobic women had during this era. As lesbianism, and lesbian feminism, began obtaining widespread prominence and popularity, fundamentalist Christian women began fighting against these standards by attacking their morality and justification to marry. If marriage was an institution that represented the holy matrimony between two heterosexuals, the lesbian community really had no claim to it, and to assume so would be fallacious. Considering this

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<sup>99</sup> Ralph B. Potter, Jr, "The Abortion Debate," in *Antifeminism in America: Reaction to the Modern Women's Movement, 1963 to the Present*, ed. Angela Howard and Sasah Ranaé Adams Tarrant (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), 13-26.

<sup>100</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, "Experts from *The Power of the Positive Woman*," in *Antifeminism in America: Reaction to the Modern Women's Movement, 1963 to the Present*, ed. Angela Howard and Sasah Ranaé Adams Tarrant (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), 101-114.

practice as unnatural and against the institution of marriage, these women attacked feminism because they believed it was destroying the prestige of civil union.<sup>101</sup>

Moreover, antifeminists hoped to stop these feminists from destroying their ability to remain housewives by breaking away from traditional women's roles and forcing the entire gender to submit to working out of the home. For antifeminists like Schlafly, feminism represented an attack on women who were content with their placement in society, content with their marriages, and content with their position as the subservient gender. With feminist discourse on the rise, antifeminists reacted by stating feminists were highlighting only the negative parts. More specifically, Schlafly herself wrote that, for feminists, the institution of marriage was only "an institution of dirty dishes and dirty diapers" while also stating that the organization of NOW was against Christianity, America, and motherhood. Society needed to protect itself by defining differing roles to women and men, especially in the home and in their marriages; to Schlafly, and antifeminist activists like her, women and men were different biological beings that had a predestined role to perform labor in different gender stations, there could be no equality between them because they are fundamentally different beings. Moreover, she also believed that laws and regulations needed to associate these differences to protect women's roles and the institution of marriage.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 228-232.

<sup>102</sup> Anita Bryant, "Lord, Teach Me to Submit." In *Antifeminism in America: A Collection of Readings from the Literature of the Opponents to U.S. Feminism, 1848 to the Present*, ed Angela Howard and Sasha Ranaé Adams Tarrant, 73-81, (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), 73-81.

Schlafly's beliefs would have monumental ripples within the discourse, and ultimate failure, of the ERA in Congress. Seeing it as an attack on women by those engaging in immoral lifestyles and misandrists with no respect for the biological certainties that separated the dichotomized social structure of gender, Schlafly pronounced that only radicals, lesbians, socialists, and government employees supported the ERA because they a. had no respect for marriage as a historical institution, and b. could not represent many women's voices and opinions. To align oneself with the feminist "radicals" of the late twentieth-century was to forego the long history and respect that women held in the household. If the ERA were to pass, women would lose their biological privileges to be protected and cared for under the institution of the head-component model; so to speak, with the passage of this amendment, marriage would no longer protect women, allow them to remain housewives, and would fundamentally destroy the reputation of marriage. The entire system would collapse because women were demanding the prestige in society that only men should be allowed to obtain.<sup>103</sup>

The antifeminist movement, especially when we look at its impacts to the ERA, represents a fundamental shift in the discussion of marriage, feminism, and how these two powerful entities of the American consciousness interacted with one another. With the backlash of antifeminism, many women demanded a return to the value of traditionalism society promoted during the fifties. Moreover, while marriage had essentially undergone a transformation that could not be altered, antifeminists ensured this institution would not change further, especially with the rise of conservatism in the eighties. Marriage had become a more equalized institution,

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<sup>103</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 332-342.

however, antifeminism demonstrated that many women were not yet ready to circumvent these alterations into their own homes. While major gains such as Title XI, Roe v. Wade, and the rise of unilateral divorce had fundamentally allowed women to achieve equality, they were still represented as subservient, and this antifeminist backlash to feminist discourse only catalyzes this facet of society's rising conservatism, especially as an outspoken phenomenon.<sup>104</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Marriage transformed with the rise of feminist popularity. Under these tenants, a more democratic partnership arose to challenge the old notion of patriarchal domination within the household. The notion that the old doctrine of feme covert was key to a healthy relationship dissolved.<sup>105</sup> As the second-wave feminist movement progressed following 1963 and the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, women saw a rise in their responsibilities as individuals, however, the emphasis on community and extending out of the family was also impressed on those dissatisfied with their nuptial agreements. As more women understood that their latent despair as homemakers was a demographic issue rather than a personal one, the bubbling of the second-wave feminist movement began to take form on the introspective level. Feminism during the sixties and seventies represented a change in how women perceived their own self and their autonomy. With the rise of the contraceptive revolution, women and husbands could now plan when they would have children and begin a family. Consequently, these changes in feminine responsibility of motherhood began to fall by the wayside as many young women began pushing back the age in which they eloped. The second-wave feminist movement allowed for more

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Festival of Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 342-343.

women to have a choice over their bodies, minds, jobs, and consequently, their marriages. The birth control pill, the passage of Roe V Wade, the introduction of Title IX, and the rise in more equal, available divorce settlements with the increase of unilateral annulments, demonstrates that marriage had transformed into a domestic partnership instead of a gendered hierarchy of oppression. Furthermore, women wanting to work instead of taking care of their families, and many women demanding more sexual pleasure out of the intercourse they were engaging in, establishes that this new movement was a more radical, expressive form of feminism with many facets that brought new, exciting, and scary changes into the lives of all Americans.

With antifeminism coming into the picture, this movement slowed down and eventually dissipated, allowing both the conservative resurgence of the 1980's to develop, a decrease in the tenacity of feminist sentiment within many Americans, but most importantly, this movement would allow the next era of feminism to arise in the nineties and into our present day. Significantly, these factors play together because, without each of their influence, women may still be the subservient beings they were in the forties and fifties. The influx of this feminist sect allowed women to become more demanding and selfish on taking their own lives, happiness, and to reexamine the purpose of their lives. More importantly, the second-wave feminist movement also allowed women to have more equal protection under the law, dissolving most of the blatant sex discrimination practiced within the American business sector. With the cessation of single income families, and the rise of women joining the professional workforce; marriage, and the dichotomy of heterosexuality, transformed forever. Furthermore, it is because of the second-wave feminist movement that we see the beginnings of our modern system of maternity, dating, and cohabitation. With the decrease in the head-component model of matrimony, and its

replacement of the junior partner/senior partner system, or even the equal partner's system, marriage transformed to allow women to exhibit control over themselves and their destinies. It is through the grassroots liberalism of the sixties, the influx of new, self-reflective feminist writings, rejection of domestic professionalism, the contraception revolution, and even the advent of intense antifeminism that the panorama of modern matrimony develops in the American sociopolitical arena.