

CAREER PLANNING FOR WOMEN

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THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Women have always worked. They have worked on farms and as servants in homes of the upper-class.¹

After the start of the Industrial Revolution, they joined men in the factories and sweatshops of the cities.

Unlike men, they remained on the periphery of the working world, concentrated in low status, poor paying jobs.²

The very few who did reach top management usually attained their positions through wartime diversion of manpower, by way of a family-owned business, or death of a husband.³

With only slight fluctuations from year to year, the number of women working outside the home or family farm remained between twenty and twenty-five percent of all women.⁴

World War II precipitated the movement of large numbers of women into the work force, and this social change was the beginning of the present social revolution. In 1972, 43.8 percent of women, 16 years of age and older were working outside the home.

Their positions, however, were no higher on the scale of organizational status in 1972, than they were in 1900, although the number of working women had almost

doubled. Women's position in the work force has simply been a reflection of women's position in society in general. Throughout recorded history, except for brief periods and in isolated locations, women have occupied a subordinate position to men, and women's activities have been considered of relative unimportance when compared to the activities of men.⁶

Two major factors which have contributed substantially to the historical subordination of women are the cultural conditioning of women to exhibit behavior and characteristics appropriate to an inferior group;⁷ and the belief by many males (and females too) that women are not exhibiting learned characteristics, but are in fact, biologically and intellectually inferior.⁸

The idea that women are taught to submerge their potential is simply disregarded.⁹ Women, for example, have been taught to defer final authority and decision-making to any male, regardless of his intelligence or ability. In addition, the general male attitude toward women as a group has changed, but only slightly (and in some cases not at all) as the following quote by Dr. Grayson Kirk, former President of Columbia University demonstrates:

It would be preposterously naive to suggest that a B.A. can be as attractive to girls as a marriage license.¹⁰

Changing the perception of women in everyday life, and lifting the restriction on the limited functions imposed on women by society is a slow and difficult process.

An Englishwoman, Mary Wollstonecraft, a pioneer in the fight for women's rights and author of the book, A Vindication of the Rights of Women published in 1792, wrote:

Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their Mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives...¹¹

Simone de Beauvoir, more widely known as an existential philosopher, but also the author of the now classic book on women's social condition, The Second Sex, wrote in the nineteen forties:

... The necessity for woman is to charm a masculine heart; intrepid and adventurous though they may be, it is recompense to which all heroines aspire; and most often no quality is asked of them other than their beauty. It is understandable that the care of her physical appearance should become for the young girl a real obsession; be they princesses or shepheresses, they must always be pretty in order to obtain love and happiness; homeliness is cruelly associated with wickedness...¹²

And, Betty Friedan, the Mother of modern feminism and author of the book, The Feminine Mystique, wrote in the early nineteen sixties:

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