

Discrimination against women

[Sociology](#), [Social Issues](#)



Women were and still are discriminated in Society Discrimination, in a general sense, simply means making a decision based on some distinctive factor. It involves making decisions on treating people differently based on prohibited discrimination factors such as race, age, sex, color, disability or national origin. Throughout history, the most common discrimination we hear about is the race of people. Thus, no one really takes into consideration of how woman are discriminated because of their sex, and how they are treated lower because of what their roles were traditionally. Therefore, by what one knows about discrimination, one would ask why is discrimination directed towards women? Throughout most of history women generally have had fewer legal rights and career opportunities than men. Wifery and motherhood were considered as women's most significant professions. Women were long considered naturally weaker than men, fastidious, and unable to perform work requiring muscular or intellectual development. " In most pre-industrial societies, for example, domestic chores were relegated to women, leaving " heavier" labor such as hunting and plowing to men. This ignored the fact that caring for children and doing such tasks as milking cows and washing clothes also required heavy, sustained labor" (Ryan 81-82). Wifery, the natural biological role, has been regarded as the major social role of women, as mentioned before. The resulting discrimination that " a woman's place is in the home" has largely determined the ways in which women have expressed themselves. Yang 2 Traditionally, children (girls) tend to learn from their mother's that cooking, cleaning, and caring for members of the household was the behavior expected of them when they grow up. " Tests made in the 1960s showed that the academic achievement

of girls was higher in the early grades than in high school. The major reason given was that the girls' own anticipation decreased because neither their families nor their teachers expected them to prepare for a future other than that of marriage and motherhood" (Ryan 10-11). Women, they say, are encouraged to be good mothers. They need, therefore, to first attract a man to depend on; they are expected (by our culture) to be giving, emotional, unstable, weak, and talkative about their problems; they are valued for their looks or charm or smallness but not their strength or brains; they are considered unfeminine ("bad") if they are ambitious, demanding, and tough or rough; they are expected to follow "their man" and give their lives to "their children," and on and on (Pogrebin 44). So basically, women are expected to serve others, to sacrifice their desires and personal needs in order to please and care for others. These myths and facts of how women were naturally inferior have greatly influenced their views of how they see themselves. That is why, in the 19th century, women began working outside their homes in large numbers, mostly in textile mills and garment shops. Since they "supposedly" didn't have any skills or experience, these were the only jobs they can start out with. "They worked in poorly ventilated, crowded rooms and worked for as long as 12 hours a day. It was not until the 1910s that the states began to pass legislation limiting working hours and improving working conditions of women" (Ryan 82-83). Yang 3 It was in the 1960s when the federal law started passing laws to improve the economic status of women. One of these was The Equal Pay Act of 1963. This required equal wages for men and women doing equal work. The second one was The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which restricted discrimination against women by

any company with 25 or more employees. Even in 1967, a Presidential Executive Order prohibited discrimination against women in hiring by federal government contractors (Appleby, Brinkley & McPherson 567-568). These laws that were passed to help women from discrimination, was a failure. Female workers were still underpaid, overworked and exploited. In addition to the problems, women also suffered from the heavy burden of discrimination based on their gender. " They were assigned to the least skilled jobs, given the fewest possibilities for advancement, and treated as the most expendable members of the workforce" (Chafe 67). Discrimination then persisted in other fields. Department stores would not let married women have their own credit cards because they think that since the man of the family was the supporter, they should not be allowed to own one. Similarly, divorced or single women often found it difficult to obtain credit to purchase a house or a car (Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia). Laws that dealt with crime and prostitution also displayed discrimination against women. Discrimination in crime existed in some areas of the United States. " A woman who shot and killed her husband would be accused of homicide, but the shooting of a wife by her husband could be termed a " passion shooting" (Filene 194). " Often women prostitutes were prosecuted although their male customers were allowed to go free" (195). As of now, in the 20th century, women have professions such as doctors, lawyers, preachers, teachers, writers, singers, etc. The medical profession is an example of changed attitudes in the 19th and 20th centuries about what was considered as Yang 4 appropriate work for women. Prior to the 1800s there were almost no medical schools, and practically any ambitious person could practice

medicine. However, on top of all this, specific discrimination against women started to develop again. Women now, constitute more than 45 percent of employed persons in the United States. Although the number of women working as managers, officials, and other administrators has been increasing, in 1990 they were outnumbered about 1.5 to 1 by men. Workingwomen often faced discrimination on the mistaken belief that, because they were married or would most likely get married, they would not be permanent workers. But married women generally continued on their jobs for many years and were not a transient, temporary, or undependable work force (Gutek & Morasch 57). Despite their increased occupancy in the work force, most women still have a major amount of responsibility for housework and family care. Even though they are workingwomen in society, they don't seem like they can ever escape the fact their expected roles will not change. Women are still discriminated to be the women they once were, which was wifehood and motherhood. "The wife who worked from nine to five and who was still expected to be a full-time homemaker experienced difficulty in resolving the conflicting priorities in her life" (Chafe 200). Perhaps the most important thing is that women tried to change the traditional views of their role in society. One can definitely say that if women weren't discriminated in the past, they would not have been discriminated today. Although the discrimination of women has been better in the present days, no matter what, it still exists. No one can change the way people thought traditionally, no one could now. Yang 5 Works Cited "Discrimination." The Columbia Encyclopedia: 2000 Sixth Edition. Ryan, M. P. Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present. London: New York, 1979. Pogrebin, L. C.

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