

# American women



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In the earlier 20th century it was very difficult for women to get education. Dean Millicent C. McIntosh in Barnard College's 1951-1952 Blue Book (the volume of rules governing undergraduate women), wrote that “ Never has there been such urgent need for trained women college graduates-to serve our communities, to enter our professions and to give wise direction and inspiration to home life.” During this period the middle and upper class white, American women were expected to get married, raise children and look after their families. There were only a few female-only institutions that provided education to the women. The primary focus of these schools was to teach and prepare women to become good housewives and mothers although a few got the opportunity to get trained for the restricted professional world (“ Unigo”, 2009). As John Briggs says “ education played a large role in the women’s rights movement of the 20th century because it was seen as a key to success in gaining social, economic and political equality.” The education mainly comprised of subjects such as mathematics and home economics as it was understood that these subjects will help them in running their houses and educating their children. Also, subjects like child birth, hygiene and first aid were preferred by many women. Poor women were educated by well to do women who had the finance to attend schools (Briggs, n. d). Christie Anne Farhaan (1994) argued that U. S needed an educated citizenry and this in turn required the nurturing of the young by more educated mothers and so women’s education was very important (pg 16). The seven sisters was one of the first all women college which encouraged women to study liberal arts and had high academic standards which could be compared to that of men’s colleges. Since education was limited to the white women, colleges for the black women also sprang after <https://assignbuster.com/american-women-essay-samples/>

the civil war. Further catholic colleges were opened due to the increase in the immigration after the Second World War (Antler, n. d). The primary reasons for the need for educating women during the early period was increase in the demand of more teachers due to the increase in the number of colleges, growing interest of girls to learn further, increase in the spare time with women with developing technology and improved infrastructure and growth of employment opportunities due to emergence of new areas of work after the civil war (Newcomer, 1959). However the 1960's saw a change in the scenario of education. There was sudden boom in the number of students seeking higher education due to returning veterans and later the " baby boom." The all-male colleges started admitting women into their campuses due to the social and legislative changes. At the same time many women colleges became coeducational or merged with other all male colleges or coeducations in order to survive the competition in higher education. Also during the Second World War, most men were engaged in the war front which gave woman the opportunity to enter male dominated fields like science, politics, mathematics and business (Chamberlain, 1988). In the early 20th century, education was required to become good housewives and mothers and for a limited number of professional jobs like teachers and nursing, although today in the new 21st century, women study to become professionals and have a separate identity. In the earlier times women's status was determined by what her husband earned but today due to education a women is no more dependent on her spouse and has walked past men in the professional arena. Also there were separate colleges for men and women because men's field of education was different then women's and it was not considered safe for girls to study along with boys in

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the beginning of the century. However today in the 21st century most of the colleges are co-educational and very few women's colleges have strived. Women were supposed to study subjects like nursing, domestic science, food science, home economics, library science and teacher training in the early 1990's but today they have made a place in all the fields earlier dominated by men like business, medicine, law, science and politics. There was huge discrimination in the laws for men's education versus the women' education in the form of better loan facility for men than women in the early period but due to women's continuous fight for equality has changed the whole system (Briggs, n. d). For example, in 1996, the Virginia Military Institute which was an all male public institute for higher education had to open its gates to females after the law was passed by the Supreme Court (Baker, 1996). In the early times only affluent white females were supposed to take education but today each and every woman whether she is white or black, rich or poor is entitled to receive proper education. The traditional thought that middle and upper class women required education to be good housewives and the poor ones couldn't afford education was replaced with the help of woman activists who not only demanded education for all but made the government provide loans for the poor women to educate themselves. Despite the differences in the education of women in the early period of the 20th century and today, there existed some similarities too. In the early 1990's there was the women suffrage movement and today we have the woman rights movement in the 21st century. According to the U. S census bureau of 2000, women still earned less than men did, but the salary gap between women and men decreased. The median annual salary for full-time working women was \$27,355 -- about 73 percent of what men in similar careers were paid (“

American women”, n. d). Thus there are certain areas which still need to be worked upon before we can say women are equal to men in every sphere of life. As Briggs says “ Incorporating women into the educational, social and political spheres led to the 1972 passage of Title IX, which forbids discrimination based on gender in academics or athletics at any school receiving federal money”. The benefits of women’s education cannot be denied as a more educated women leads to better salaries and managerial advances in the private sector. Today women hold posts in the highest political orders, work as CEO’s in top fortune 500 companies and have better capabilities to start a business than men. References “ American women” (n. d). Women’s history month (part 1). Retrieved from Antler, Joyce (1982). “ Culture, Service and Work: Changing Ideals of Higher Education for Women,” The Undergraduate Woman: Issues in Educational Equity . In Pamela J. Perun (ed). (p. 16). Lexington, MA: DC Heath and Co. Baker, Donald P. (September 22, 1996). “ By One Vote, VMI Decides to Go Coed,” The Washington Post. (p. A10). Briggs, John (n. d). Women’s education rights in the 20th century. ehow. Retrieved from Chamberlain, Mariam (Eds.). (1988). Women in Academe: Progress and Prospects (p. 107). New York: Russell Sage Foundation Farnham, Christie Anne (1994). The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South (p. 16). New York: New York University Press Newcomer Mabel (1959). A Century of Higher Education for American Women (p. 16). New York: Harper and Brothers “ Unigo” (May11, 2009). From straight laced to unlaced: Womens education in the 20th century, Associated content from yahoo. Retrieved from