



# Council on Contemporary Families Gender Revolution Online Symposium

In celebration of International Women's Day

Convened and edited by  
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# CCF Gender Revolution Symposium

## Introduction

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In 1973 - less than 40 years ago -- the Supreme Court ruled that sex-segregated employment ads were illegal. The next two decades saw massive, rapid action in eradicating old laws and prejudices. But now three researchers argue that progress toward gender equality has slowed or even stalled since the early 1990s.

In an online symposium organized by the Council on Contemporary Families in time for International Women's Day, David A. Cotter, Joan M. Hermsen and Reeve Vanneman present their discussion paper "**Is the Gender Revolution Over?**" and CCF fellows from around the United States offer a series of responses that add to this discussion.

So, what do Cotter, Hermsen and Vanneman see as the status of women and the gender revolution? Key findings include:

- **A slowing of women's entry into new occupations and positions.** Barriers to women's opportunities in traditionally male jobs have declined since the 1960s-for example, the 1970s and 1980s saw a 20 percentage point increase in women managers. Yet during the next two decades there was only a five percent increase in women's representation in management. Working-class occupations are nearly as segregated today as they were in 1950 and have become more segregated since 1990.
- **More educational degrees for women, but continued segregation of college majors.** In some fields, women have even lost ground since the mid 1980s. In 1970 only 14 percent of computer and information sciences degrees were granted to women. By 1985 women's share had increased almost threefold, to 37 percent. But by 2008 women accounted for only 18percent of degrees in the field.
- **Some signs that the rapid changes in traditional attitudes toward women between 1977 and the mid 1990s have come to an end.** From 1977 to 1996, the percentage of people who believe women are less suited to politics than men fell by half, to around 22 percent. However, despite the attention to the campaigns of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin, there's been no change over the past two decades, and almost one-fourth of Americans still hold this view. In addition, since 1994, there has been some slippage in support for egalitarian marital arrangements.

Cotter and his colleagues conclude that "the gender revolution has not been reversed," but "it is stalled on several fronts - and there is still a long way to go."

### **Cohen, Galinsky, Jones: Look at the Labor Market**

University of Maryland demographer Philip Cohen elaborates on the minimal progress women have made in management, in "**What if Women Were in Charge?**" and points to the long-run implications for working women. Work and Family Institute President Ellen Galinsky argues that men's support for more egalitarian family practices has not stalled, in "**Gender Evolution Among Employed Men.**" She suggests, however, that the transformation of family life may yet stall if we do not abandon our work-centric definitions of masculinity and develop more family-friendly workplaces.

Labor market researcher Janelle Jones of the Center for Economic and Policy Research notes in "**Divergent Revolutions for Blacks, Latinos, and Whites**" that there is a smaller gender wage gap among African Americans and Latinos than among whites. But she notes that this is partly because men have been losing ground in the workforce.

### **More Responses: Gains in Some Areas, Stalls in Others**

In "**No Stall in the Sexual Revolution,**" Indiana University sociologist Brian Powell link draws on his research on American attitudes about family diversity to document the remarkable expansion of support for gay and lesbian couples and families during the past decade.

But that leaves two other scholars--Paula England from New York University and Barbara Risman from University of Illinois-Chicago-presenting different viewpoints on what has and has not changed. In "**In Sex and Romance, Not So Much Gender Revolution,**" CCF senior fellow Paula England notes several trends in personal behavior that remain remarkably resistant to change. But CCF executive officer Barbara Risman is more impressed by the radical transformation in girls' self-confidence in "**The Beat Goes On.**"

In "**Revolutions Seldom Revolutionize Everything,**" CCF co-chair and Evergreen State College family historian Stephanie Coontz also sees the hangovers from the past that England and Risman discuss. She goes on to explain that the movement for gender equity has become more complicated now that sexism is no longer a monolithic system, imposed by outright exclusion and legal enforcement of inequality. In their rejoinder Cotter et al concede that a real revolution has occurred but note that counter-revolutions, or at least reversals of gains, are not uncommon.

## Keynote: "Is the Gender Revolution Over?"

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From 1968 through the 1980s, the former Phillip Morris company promoted a new brand of cigarettes to women under the slogan: "You've come a long way baby." For once, an ad agency was not exaggerating. Between the early 1960s and the end of the 1980s, sex-segregated want ads were outlawed, equal pay laws were passed, courts prohibited older practices of establishing admissions and hiring quotas and assigning promotions on the basis of sex, laws giving husbands authority over their wives were repealed, women gained access to educational fields, sports, and jobs formerly closed to them, and traditional prejudices against women dramatically lessened.

But what has happened since the end of the 1980s? When we look at the contrast between 1950 and today, it may appear that we are in the midst of an ongoing and irreversible revolution in gender roles and relationships. In 1950, less than 30 percent of women worked outside the home, and the typical woman who worked full-time year round earned just 59¢ for every dollar earned by men. By 2010 more than three-quarters of women worked outside the home. On average, women now make almost 75 percent as much as men, and women in their 20s actually earn more than their male counterparts in several metropolitan areas.

In 1950 employed women worked in a handful of almost exclusively female occupations. Today, they are represented across nearly the entire spectrum of occupations. In the late 1960s just over half of voters said that they would vote for a well-qualified woman for president if their party nominated one. By the late 1990s more than 90 percent said they would. In 1960 only a third of college degrees were awarded to women - by 2010 58 percent of bachelor's degrees went to women.

Many people believe that these changes have pushed us to a tipping point. In 2010, the widely lauded Shriver Report declared that America had become "A Woman's Nation" - a fact that "Changes Everything." Some have wondered if we might be facing, as an Atlantic Monthly article asked, "the end of men," or at least of male dominance. Others argue, in the

title of a March 2012 book, that "the new majority of female breadwinners" portends the emergence of women as "The Richer Sex."

Our research suggests that such claims are wildly exaggerated. In fact, beginning in the 1990s, there was a significant slowing in progress toward gender equality that has yet to be reversed. Consider the following indicators:

1. **Labor Force Participation:** Among the "prime working age" population of 25 to 54 year-olds, women's participation in the labor force rose rapidly from the 1960s through the 1980s, from just 44 percent in 1962 to 74 percent in 1990. However, it then slowed in the 1990s and stalled in the 2000s -- rising only 4 points, to 78 percent, in 2000 and then falling to 76 percent by 2010. The most rapid convergence between women's and men's workforce participation, then, occurred between 1962 and 1990, and most of the slight convergence between men and women since 2000 has not been due to a continued upward trend in women's labor force participation but to a continuing decline in men's labor force participation, which has fallen from 97 percent in 1962 to 89 percent in 2010.
2. **Occupational and Educational Segregation:** There was a sharp decline in occupational segregation during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Here too, however, the pace of change slowed considerably in the 1990s and all but stopped in the period from 2000-2010. For instance, among managers, female representation increased by approximately one percentage point per year in the 1970s and 1980s, but by a total of only three percentage points for the entire decade of the 1990s and just two in first decade of the 21st century. Most of the decline in occupational segregation, moreover, was confined to middle-class jobs. Working class occupations are nearly as segregated today as they were in 1950 and have become more segregated since 1990.

Looking at all occupations, gender segregation declined by between four and five points in each decade from 1960 to 1990, dropping by a total of 14 points (from 63 to 49). But from 1990 to 2000 it dropped by just two points, and in the 2000s by only 1/3 of a point. In fact the amount of change in the 1980s was nearly twice as much as the change observed in the 1990s and 2000s combined.

A similar pattern can be observed in the desegregation of college majors - rapid progress in the 1970s and then a stalling after the mid-1980s. In some fields, women have even lost ground since the mid 1980s. In 1970 only 14 percent of computer and information sciences degrees were granted to women. By 1985 women's share had increased almost threefold, to 37 percent. But by 2008 women accounted for only 18 percent of degrees in the field.

3. **Gender Attitudes:** The patterns get more complicated when we examine changes in people's attitudes about appropriate gender roles. In the General Social Survey, four questions have been asked consistently from 1977 to 2010. Two that ask about the effects of mothers' working on children show rapid increases in support for working mothers from the 1970s through 1980s, then a decline in such support in the 1990s. In 1977, more than half of respondents felt that mother's working was harmful to children. By 1994 that percentage had fallen to 30 percent, but by 2000 it had crept

back up to 38 percent. However, in this case, there was a rebound in the first decade of the 21st century, with approval of working mothers reaching new highs. By 2010, 75 percent of Americans agreed that "a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work," and 65 percent said that preschool children were NOT likely to suffer if their mother worked outside the home.

Another question explores beliefs about whether men are better suited to politics than women. In 1977 half of those polled said yes and half said no. But by 1996, only 21 percent of Americans agreed that men are better suited than women. This rose to 26 percent in 2008 and then fell to 22 percent in 2010 - a much smaller figure than in 1977 but essentially no change since 1996, despite the excitement generated by the campaigns of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin.

The final gender attitude question asks people whether they agree that "It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family." In 1977 66 percent of Americans agreed and only 34 percent disagreed. These percentages were reversed by 1994, with only 34 percent agreeing that such traditional marital arrangements were better and 66 percent disagreeing. Again, though, since 1994 there has been slippage in support for egalitarian family arrangements. The percentage disagreeing fell to 60 percent in 2000, then crept up to 64 percent in 2010, 2 points lower than in 1994.

When we first started writing about this subject, we wondered whether what we were observing was real, whether it was significant, and whether it was a permanent shift or temporary setback. Today we still have the same questions - but are more confident that it is real and more certain that it matters. We do not know whether there will be renewed progress in the near future, but at this point it is clear that although the gender revolution has not been reversed, it is stalled on several fronts - and there is still a long way to go. -DC, JH, RV / March 6, 2012

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## What If Women Were In Charge?

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Few would deny there was a gender revolution in the world of management from the 1970s through the mid-1990s or so. But after more than doubling from 1970 to 1990 - from less than 15 percent to more than 30 percent - women's progress slowed. After more than 15 years, women have not yet reached 40 percent of those employed full-time in management occupations. Further, those managerial women have median earnings that are just 73 percent of men's (compared with 78 percent overall).

Not only has the rate of growth in women's representation in management stalled, but women have become increasingly concentrated in very specific types of positions. You might not be surprised to learn that 94 percent of day care center managers are women. But less obviously, women now make up three-quarters of the managers in the human resource offices of the banking industry, and the frontline offices of nursing homes. This is not integration: It's ghettoization.

Meanwhile, at the very top of the corporate hierarchy, just 14 percent of Fortune 500 CEO and just 16 percent of their corporate board of director members are women (and only 3 percent are women of color). In heavy blue-collar industries managerial women remain nearly invisible.

The stall in women's representation in management harms more than the individual women who might otherwise rise to the top. Such job segregation undermines future efforts to integrate workplaces, constricting people's expectations with regard to men's and women's roles, skills, and potential. It also harms the people who work in these industries, because where men dominate leadership positions, workplaces are more gender segregated and more gender hierarchical for all employees.

## Gender Evolution among Employed Men

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I prefer to think of changes in gender relations and values as an evolution, with ups and downs and uneven progress in different areas. It is not at all clear that changes in men's attitudes and behaviors have stalled. In 1977, three-quarters (74 percent) of employed men somewhat or strongly agreed that it is better for all involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and family, compared with a bare majority (52 percent) of employed women—a large gap, which has narrowed over the years. In 2002, 44 percent of men agreed compared with 39 percent of women. By 2008, the percentage of women agreeing with this statement had fallen to 37 percent -- but an even sharper drop had occurred among men, among whom only 40 percent now agreed.

We see similar changes in men's involvement on the home front. Employed fathers increased the time they spent with their kids from 2 hours per work day in 1977 to 3.1 hours in 2008. An even stronger sign that gender evolution continues is that among the younger generation -- the Gen Y'ers -- fathers spend an average of 4.1 hours per workday with their children. Women acknowledge this change—in 2008, 30 percent reported that their husbands or partners took as much or more responsibility for the children as they did, up from just 21 percent in 1992.

But these changes have taken a toll on men, who appear to be experiencing what women experienced when they entered the workforce in record numbers—the pressure to "do it all." My colleagues Kerstin Aumann, Ken Matos and I term this phenomenon "the new male mystique."

In dual-earner couples, the percentage of fathers experiencing some or a lot of work-family conflict has jumped from 35 percent in 1977 to 60 percent in 2008, while mothers' level has stayed statistically the same (41 percent and 47 percent, respectively). Among men, the greatest risk factors for experiencing work-family conflict are working long hours, working in demanding jobs, being work-centric (putting work first), or being a father in a dual-earner couple.

Gender evolution continues, particularly among men. This evolution could stall, however, if men don't stop holding themselves - and being held by their supervisors -- to work-centric standards, and especially if the workplace doesn't adjust to the realities of dual-earner families. Men and women alike need more flexible work policies and supportive supervisors who respect the family needs of fathers as well as mothers.

## Divergent Revolutions for Blacks, Latinos, and Whites

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As Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman argue, the extent of the gender revolution has been exaggerated. In the years between the passage of the Equal Pay Act in 1963 and 2010, the pay gap has closed at less than half-a-cent per year. Currently, women make about 75 percent as much as men.

Some racial groups, however, have experienced more closing of the gap. In 1980, black women earned 76 percent of what black men earned. By 1990, that had risen to 88 percent. The rate of progress did slow in the 1990s, as Cotter et al found for women as a whole. Still, by 2010, black women made 92 percent as much as black men, which at first glance suggests more progress in gender equality among African-Americans.

Part of this greater convergence in wages is caused by a divergence in educational completion. In 1980, equal numbers (17 percent) of black men and women had a college degree or higher. Thirty years later, the percent of black women with a bachelor's or advanced degree had risen to 19 percent but dropped to 16 percent for men, which suggests that the progress of black men may have stalled more than the progress of black women.

Another part of this story is stagnating wages for black men. Between 1980 and 2010, the median hourly wage for black men increased only 30 cents, from \$14.08 to \$14.43. Over the same time period, black women's median wage increased more than \$2.50, from \$10.67 to \$13.21, although it is important to note that it started from a much lower base and remains below that of men.

Like their black counterparts, Latina women made 92 percent of Latino men's earnings in 2010. However, in this case the decline in the pay gap has been gradual but steady, with no fall-off in the 1990s. Latina women earned 76 percent of Latino men's earnings in 1980 and 83 percent in 1990. Between 1990 and 2010, Latinas gained another 9 percent.

Again, though, this narrowing is more a result of "meeting in the middle" than of catch-up. Latino men's wages actually decreased between 1980 and 2010, from \$13.57 to \$12.71. Meanwhile, Latina women's wages modestly increased from \$10.24 to \$11.31 over the same period.

Unlike African-American men, Latino men have increased their college completion rates, but Latina women have increased them even faster. In 1980, 7 percent of Latino men had a bachelor's or advanced degree, compared to 5 percent of Latina women. In 2010, 12 percent of Latina women and 11 percent of Latino men had a college degree or higher.

## No Stall in the Sexual Revolution

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The gender revolution may have been stalled, but the sexual revolution continues to gather steam. Twenty years ago, the idea of same-sex marriage was inconceivable for most heterosexual and homosexual Americans. Sixteen years ago, the Defense of Marriage Act was overwhelmingly passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton. Ten years ago anti-sodomy laws still existed in thirteen states.

In this area, progress has speeded up since the mid 1990s. President Clinton has since disavowed the Defense of Marriage Act, as has Bob Barr, the former Republican congressman who authored the bill. Today six states, along with the District of Columbia, allow same-sex marriage. This number may soon increase, in light of recent legislative and judicial actions in California, Maryland and Washington. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has ruled that anti-sodomy laws are unconstitutional.

In three successive national surveys taken with over 2200 Americans, I found that Americans continue to gravitate toward an inclusive definition of family. In 2003, nearly half of Americans refused to count any living arrangement involving same-sex couples—even those with children—as family. By 2010, this figure had dropped to just one-third.

In 2003, three-fifths of the people we interviewed opposed same-sex marriage. By 2010, more than half favored it. Today, nearly every national poll shows that more Americans back same-sex marriage than oppose it. Counting those who support civil unions, at least two-thirds of Americans now believe that same-sex couples deserve rights, benefits and recognition that just a short period ago would have been unheard of.

## In Sex and Romance, Not So Much Gender Revolution

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Back in the 1960s, feminist activists declared that "the personal is political," meaning that seemingly innocuous personal interactions, such as a man opening the door for a woman unencumbered by a package, buying his date a restaurant meal while the woman reciprocated with a home-cooked meal, or having her give up her name at marriage, recreated gender stereotypes and inequalities. Despite significant changes in law, economics, and politics, there has been very little change in many of these relational habits and expectations. Indeed, looking at the personal sphere of male/female relationships, it sometimes seems that there has been no gender revolution at all.

To take one example, a survey I did of college students at 20 U.S. colleges and universities showed it is still men who ask women on dates in almost 90 percent of cases. Men are also still expected to propose marriage. And very few men announce their impending marriage by displaying an engagement ring.

In the 1970s and 1980s there was an increase in the number of women keeping their own name upon marriage, but this never extended to more than a small fraction of brides, and the trend receded has receded since. Children are almost always given their father's last name.

The double standard of aging persists: While male actors are still cast in romantic leads as they age, women usually need to be young to be seen as desirable enough to be cast in a role involving romance. And my research shows that this double standard persists in real life as well. Women's chances of marriage decrease with age much more than men's, because the older men are when they marry, the more they seek out women younger than themselves.

Another double standard relates to sexuality-in particular, who gets judged more harshly for engaging in sex outside committed relationships. College students today sometimes "hook up"-which can mean anything from "making out" to intercourse-outside of a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship. But my research shows that women are more likely than men to be looked down upon and called names for hooking up.

## The Beat Goes On

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The gender revolution continues in many areas even if it has slowed down in others. The medical and legal professions are becoming feminized; women continue to outstrip men in educational attainment, recently surpassing them even in the completion of Ph.Ds. And the political rise of women continues unabated. Even a decade ago, it's hard to imagine that Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton could have been serious contenders for president. Women now lead some of the most prestigious institutions of higher education in the country, including Harvard.

But to my mind the real evidence lies in the outlook of young people. In my research on middle-school youth, my co-author and I found that girls couldn't even imagine why we'd ask them if they were afraid to compete with boys. They rolled their eyes as if we were from some other planet. The gender revolution has succeeded in raising girl's expectations for their future, creating a generation of boys and girls who see each other - at least in the classroom- as equals. Girls own their competitiveness, and a star soccer player is at the top of the heap. We heard absolutely no criticism of girls who liked to win, on the playing field or in the science fair. Instead, we found something surprising, at least to us: there was some peer pressure not to be too feminine and too girly. No one wanted to be seen as the kind of girl that was afraid of spiders. No one wanted some boy to have to save her.

This doesn't mean we've reached a post-feminist nirvana. Young women continue to obsess about their bodies. They seem to have taken all the angst about femininity that pervaded every facet of women's lives 50 years ago and narrowed it, with dangerous intensity, toward a focus on displaying their sexuality. It's likely to take yet another generation to get beyond the gender restrictions and expectations that surround women's bodies and sexuality, but the gender revolution clearly continues.

## Revolutions Seldom Revolutionize Everything

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Some of the ideals of the gender revolution are not yet achieved, and new forms of inequality have been created in the process of overturning older ones. But the gender revolution is already a reality.

The American Revolution did not guarantee inalienable rights to all Americans. In fact the contradictions between its equal-rights ideology and daily realities actually led to an increase in prejudices against African-Americans and women. The industrial revolution periodically gives rise to a reemergence of preindustrial forms of labor and anti-modernist movements. But in both cases there was a decisive change in the dynamics of social life. The same is true of the gender revolution.

For 5,000 years, men and women were assigned different and unequal obligations and rights in all but a few of the most simple band-level societies. Gender directly determined what work people could and could not do and what return they were entitled to for that work. Women were excluded from whole arenas of social life. Fathers and brothers had legally enforceable rights to control a woman's sexuality, property, and personal behavior.

Much of the stall described by Cotter and colleagues may be connected to the fact that we have already picked the low-hanging fruit by abolishing the most blatantly discriminatory laws. This leaves us with more complex problems in tackling the remaining inequality.

As late as 1970, gender outweighed education in determining Americans' income levels. Today, however, education outweighs gender. Much of the economic discrimination women still suffer is now filtered through the constrained (but not legally imposed) choices that people make in organizing parenthood. The way forward seems less clear to many.

Furthermore, the increased gender equity within families has ironically exacerbated socioeconomic inequality between families, as two-earner families of educated professionals pull farther ahead of their less-educated counterparts and single breadwinner families. While some people continue to press against the glass ceiling, others have become preoccupied with not falling into the concrete basement. A certain loss of momentum is not surprising.

Finally, the very victories of the movement contribute to its slow-down. It is easier to unite people against specific unjust laws and practices than to reach agreement about what should replace them.

## About CCF

The Council on Contemporary Families is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to providing the press and public with the latest research and best-practice findings about American families. Our members include demographers, economists, family therapists, historians, political scientists, psychologists, social workers, sociologists, as well as other family social scientists and practitioners.

Founded in 1996 and now based in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Miami, the Council's mission is to enhance the national understanding of how and why contemporary families are changing, what needs and challenges they face, and how these needs can best be met. To fulfill that mission, the Council holds annual conferences, open to the public, and issues periodic briefing papers and fact sheets.

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