Women in the Workforce: The Counterpunch

In a world where oppression is a major issue, women take a hard hit. A woman is told to get a job, then is paid seventy-seven cents to every man’s dollar. Another woman is told to get a job, then is talked down to. She is treated like a child, as if she is incapable of completing the task assigned. This very woman will never have the opportunity to be trusted because she is woman. Instead, she is stuck in the break-room forced to brew coffee. It was only until recently, women really worked to better themselves in the business market. In today’s society, people closely critique women and their newfound confidence towards earning a career. Those who are stuck clenching onto their traditional values are living in fear, scared of the fact that women are finally taking their lives back.

The question is why are women discriminated in the workforce in the first place? People do not want to hire women because they seem unreliable. Krugman explains, “For women, the key issues have become the problems of reconciling the demands of children and family with those of the workplace. The main issue is that some people still think women need to be the ones that take care of the family.” While the statement is evidently false, it has been proven repeatedly that men believe this to be true. Women are skipped over in the interview process because men do not want to waste their time hiring someone who will eventually leave to raise a family. This statement is biased, considering the fact that many women will argue that they can handle the two just fine. Who is the judge of how much a woman can handle? Women everyday all over the world have fought to change this opinion and have even proved that they can be better business
partners than men. Day-by-day women are gaining more and more opportunities and they are running with it. The roles of women in modern society have shifted from men being the main breadwinners to women being the main breadwinners because more opportunities are given to women to further their knowledge with education and open positions. They are also becoming the sole supporter for their family, and are being given other opportunities to ditch traditional values.

The decline in male breadwinners compared to the increase in female breadwinners is in part due to the new opportunities given to women today. These very opportunities would not have been given thirty years ago. Stride explains that, “In the past 30 years there has been a 17.5% rise in female employment.” This is because women have been able to further their education. In addition to that, some employers have started to consider taking a chance on a woman, instead of looking right over them without even taking a glance at their credentials. Because of the employers who take chances, “’In 1940, women made up under 25% of the labor force, whereas today this proportion has increased to nearly 50% (U.S. Department of Labor, March 2000)’” according to Berrgren. Women have become the increasingly more popular choice. Relatively, outside the United States, Australia is setting the example that the all other countries should take note of. Australia has taken action in the workplace and created laws that prohibit discrimination. O'Shea explains more in depth,

“The federal Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunity for Women Act 1986) replaced by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 (EOWW Act) is considered to be one of the most influential legislative remedies for redressing gender inequalities in the workplace (Strachan, Burgess & Sullivan, 2004)… The intention of the original Affirmative Action (AA) Act 1986 was to dismantle the discriminatory barriers
limiting women’s employment. Equality of opportunity was the principal goal and affirmative action constituted the interventionary practices facilitating this goal (Sheridan, 1995).”

If more actions were taken like this, even more women would have the opportunity to become a breadwinner.

The role of the family breadwinner has been awarded to women because they are becoming necessary to the family economy. Lately, it has become difficult for families to solely rely on the male’s salary and women are forced to get jobs. After the recession in 2008, many men, as the sole provider of the family, lost their jobs and families had no main source of income. Wives were forced to get a job and get to work as soon as possible. Since then, Desai explains, “the percentage of mothers working continues to rise; and families have a growing dependence on wives’ incomes.” Along with the growing rate of women working, Kohen adds that, “the divorce rates have also increased.” This has increased the amount of women in the workplace because women have to become more dependent on themselves. They have no other option. They now have to take the role of sole provider. In addition to those categories, if a woman is neither married nor divorced right now, it is possible that she will be getting married later in life. All over the world, social norms are constantly changing. Today, the social norm is to get married in your mid 20’s. Couples are getting married later than ever. This gives women more time to focus on starting a career and creating a strong, base income for a new family. This is a fairly new concept for society; however, this extra time can improve their skills and help them rise in rank. Years ago, women would get married at the young ages of nineteen or twenty or even younger than that. They had no time to go to school or even think about getting a career. Once women were married, it was all about starting a family. Newly-weds were more concerned
with starting a family, rather than furthering their education. Due to many aspects pushing women into the workplace, it has greatly helped push women into the breadwinner role.

In recent years, the roles of women in society have shifted because they have left behind their traditional values and entered the working ideals of an equal, modern society. Desai discusses the seasoned idea that, “In some marriages, gender still determines the division of labor: the man's primary responsibility is to earn wages that provide for the family's well-being while the woman's primary responsibility is to carry out the family and home-oriented tasks that facilitate the husband's wage-earning.” Kohen continues with an opposing, more modern side stating that a, “review of recent research findings suggests that women have redefined their relationship to the family so that their personal goals and interests can be met.” In summary, women have switched their focus from family to future. Women do not want to be used as baby-makers. They want to provide a good life for themselves, and not have to depend on their husband. Women have strayed away from the traditional values of staying home to care for their children and cooking supper for the family. It has been discussed that women that stay at home have been revealed that at home they feel isolated. Because stay-at-home moms are around small children every day, they desire the need to be around more adults. They feel trapped in a world with very little contact with people their own age. Even with all of this in consideration, people will and have argued that there has to remain some traditional values. People claim that women are missing their prime “baby-making” stage. They are waiting too long to have a child and it is ruining families because they missed their chance and now it is no longer possible for them to become pregnant. What they do not know is that according to the findings from Kohen people said, “One of the major factors enabling women to modify their family roles has been their control over fertility.” Women have been able to modify their family roles through fertility.
Women choose fertility to put pregnancy on the back burner while they focus on their careers. Therefore, when they are ready, it is possible to have the child they always dreamed of having. The other option is adoption. Women will always have the opportunity to start a family. There are so many options today, that it is not necessary for women to become pregnant right away. By saying goodbye to the traditional values of getting married at a young age, women are able to pursue careers and rise the ranks even before the thought of start of starting a family.

Although women find balancing career and family to be difficult at times, it also has its rewards. Women consider working to be stimulating and fulfilling. In addition, having both partners working provides more opportunities for their family. This can include more recreational activities, vacations, and a more comfortable lifestyle. It gives families more opportunities to explore and experience the different cultures around the world. In conclusion, women have fought for many years to have equality and it will take many more for women to be completely equal with men; however, the fight will continue. Women have returned with a counterpunch and have changed the way society has viewed the main breadwinner role. This was possible through more job and education opportunities, the need for self-providing, and changes in social norms. They have become the winner in today’s match.
Works Cited


