KEY FACTORS IN THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

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The First Industrial Revolution, specifically in America, was fueled by three key factors. Innovation, Population Migration, and a larger workforce than ever before. With continuing advances in industrial technologies, the creation of larger, more advanced machines became easier, leading to an increased demand for workers and employees. This led to a migration of populations from more rural areas into bigger city centers to keep up with the increased demand for labor. This demand was filled by the introduction of women into the workforce, despite the limited role they were permitted to have at the time. Each of these factors led to the economic and societal boom that was the First Industrial Revolution.

The industrial revolution was pioneered by the creation of new technologies and innovations in the way we produced machines. Specifically, the production of more advanced machines that create machines that produce varying goods. Factories were constantly popping up in cities around the world. From London to New York, a massive production boom was taking place. However, it wasn’t just goods like textiles or paper that were being mass produced. It was also tools and machines. Creating the opportunity for wealthy businessmen to create monopolies on a wide range of goods and markets. For example, in the early 1880’s, the flour mill industry changed forever. With the introduction of larger, more efficient flour mills, smaller older mills struggled to keep up with the staggering difference.[[1]](#footnote-1) This is just one example of bigger higher-tech machinery replacing the older outdated production methods. Another example of this principle is innovator Henry Ford. While he is best known for the creation of the automobile, the key difference that put him above his competition was the use and efficiency of the assembly line. By having an assembly line, Henry Ford was able to produce his cars much more quickly and thus catapulted the name Henry Ford and the Ford brand of cars into the public sphere for generations.

Having more advanced machines was great, but without someone behind the machines ensuring sure they work and maneuvering them, they were just useless hunks of fancy looking metal. The second key factor to the significance of the industrial revolution was the flow of populations from smaller rural communities to bigger urban centers. With factories becoming more common, opportunities became as common as the modern penny. Rural people looking to make their way in life moved away from their homes to the cities in droves.[[2]](#footnote-2) It wasn’t just rural farmers and people moving to the cities, especially in America: immigration was another huge boost to the population and work force of major cities and their metropolitan areas. This massive shift in population densities further led to the demand for goods like food, and shelter, but also to the demand for things like clothing, textiles, metal, cars, and about everything someone might need to live in this time. It was a never-ending cycle, demand kept going up due to new people moving in, leading to an increase in production from factories, causing them to need new people to move in to work in the factories.

Focusing on America, while women were not given the same opportunities as men, they were still given a place in the workforce. Women were starting to carve out a piece of the world for themselves. In early integrations, women were only allowed to work select jobs, typically in the house, helping with childcare, cooking, cleaning, and mending clothing. However, new opportunities started to open in other fields like secretary work, nursing, and other similar jobs. These early pioneers were able to set a precedent that snowballed for the greater good. Leading to further representation and societal changes that further opened doors for more women to pursue a career. With this influx of female workers into the labor force, the population of eligible workers soared, boosting the economy and helping fuel the industrial revolution.

However, other countries had a more postponed or slower start to their industrial revolution due to an unwillingness to allow women into the workforce. Specifically in China, around the same time, women were forced to maintain a much more traditional role. While China had the production and means to produce different products, they stalled in their move to factory production. One of the reasons for this was the lack of opportunity for women. During this time frame, young women in Europe were able to work in a limited capacity between the time they were an early teen and up until they were eligible for marriage.[[3]](#footnote-3) Some might say that the role of women in the work force was not an important part of the First Industrial Revolution. However, it was because of them that America and other European countries like England were able to achieve the change to a factory-based production economy. These roles were in fact limited, though comparatively to countries like China, those small opportunities were a major factor in the success of the American Industrial Revolution.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The First Industrial Revolution didn’t just change the population density and the way the world produced things. It fed into massive societal change, economic change, and led into the globalization of trade and communication. Something like an industrial revolution doesn’t just happen overnight. Something as complex and ever-changing as an industrial revolution requires thousands of tiny changes that build up into something bigger. While the First Industrial Revolution changed the world in so many ways, three key components stand out above the rest. These being innovation in production and assembly, a migration of internal and external populations to urban centers, and the influx of women joining the workforce, despite their limited role. These factors were crucial to the success of the First Industrial Revolution.

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