

## **The Evolution of Social Gender Roles in America Since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

### **Scope Statement**

The topic of this research plan is the evolution of social gender roles in America in since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The term “gender roles” includes all genders and recognizes gender as a social construct that has change progressively over time. This plan focuses particularly on gender roles and its effects within America in the past couple of centuries. This topic would be an appropriate and likely topic for a research paper or project for a Women’s Studies or Gender Studies major in an academic library setting.

### **Introduction**

Gender and the idea of “gender roles” has always existed, but perhaps has only been labeled as such in the past century or so, mainly because of the questioning of and rebellion towards these gender roles. Because of this questioning and rebellion, “gender” has changed drastically over time as it is no longer viewed (by most) as a biological fact but more as a social construct. With each generation, attitudes change in a positive direction for gender equality and this is possible because, as shown in one study, children form their attitudes about gender roles and gender identity from the behaviors of their parents rather than their ideology (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016). This is why factors such as religion (an ideology) cannot penetrate the generational gap as easily. For example, even if a woman believes (because she has been taught) that she should be always submissive to her husband, her frustrations from not being seen as equal still rise to the surface eventually (Perry, 2016).

Unfortunately, due to the constant and long-standing oppression of women, men still seem to occupy the majority of authority positions within the United States. Religion has had much to do with this inequality between genders, especially in rural areas where the income inequality gap is large (Siordia, 2016). Women are beginning to be viewed as equals as the United States has finally had its first female nominee for President from a major political party. As a society, different ideas have been implemented in order to make up for this inequality, such as Affirmative Action for women in the workplace. However, this particular instance, the good intentions backfired as it made women seem like the needed protecting and extra help (Fraser et. al., 2015).

Because women are seen as less than, the idea of a man acting the way a woman would act is viewed negatively by a large part of society. The sexual double standard that women face, in which they are shamed for sexual activity for which men are praised, is often shared with homosexual men (Zaikman et. al., 2016). Studies have also shown that the high rates of psychiatric issues in women could be due to constant oppression through these long standing gender roles, meaning basically that the oppressors (supremacist men) could be to blame and that it has nothing to do with the biological makeup of the female (Sachs-Ericsson & Ciarlo, 2000). The “gender lines” are being blurred every day as the patriarchy is being slowly chipped away by people that want to see all people be equal once and for all.

### **Relative Library of Congress Classification Numbers and Respective Subject Headings**

**Class H** – Social Sciences

**Subclass HQ** – The family. Marriage. Women.

**HD6050-6305** – Classes of Labor – Including women, children, students, middle-aged and older persons, minorities

**HQ12-449** – Sexual Life

**HQ503-1064** – The family. Marriage. Home.

**HQ755.7-759.92** – Parents. Parenthood.

**HQ799.5-799.9** – Young men and women.

**HQ801-801.83** – Man-woman relationships. Courtship. Dating.

**HQ1101-2030.7** – Women. Feminism.

**HV1442-1448** – Women (Social Pathology).

### **Subject Headings and Keywords Statement**

Subject Headings relative to locating information on the topic:

Women—Social Conditions.

Women—United States—History.

Sex Role—United States—History.

United States—Social Conditions.

Keywords relative to locating information on the topic:

Gender AND Roles AND America

### **Specialized Encyclopedias/Dictionaries/Handbooks**

Rappaport, H. (2001). *Encyclopedia of women social reformers*. Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO.

This encyclopedia profiles women (well-known and not) that played major roles in women's social reform from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the 1970s.

Appleby, J. O., Cheng, E. K., & Goodwin, J. L. (2002). *Encyclopedia of women in american history*. Armonk, N. Y: Sharpe Reference.

This encyclopedia, written by over 40 experts on the subject, all with university affiliations, has not only biographical entries, but information that displays gender roles throughout American history.

Worell, J., 1928. (2001). *Encyclopedia of women and gender: Sex similarities and differences and the impact of society on gender*. San Diego, Calif: Academic Press.

This encyclopedia focuses mainly on gender itself as a social construct rather than a biological trait, its evolution over time, and how it has affected society within America.

### **Databases & Articles**

#### **Sociology (ProQuest)**

BaberCorinna, K. M. (2006). The social roles questionnaire: A new approach to measuring attitudes toward gender. *Sex Roles*, 54(7-8), 459-467.

doi:<http://dx.doi.org.jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/10.1007/s11199-006-9018-y>

This article presents two studies in which participants go through a questionnaire to determine where they fall within preconceived social gender roles, if at all, and to understand the thinking behind people's perceived notions about gender roles in general and in themselves.

Cichy, K. E., Lefkowitz, E. S., & Fingerman, K. L. (2007). Generational differences in gender attitudes between parents and grown offspring. *Sex Roles*, 57(11-12), 825-836.

doi:<http://dx.doi.org.jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/10.1007/s11199-007-9314-1>

This article discusses a study conducted to discover the difference in gender-role-thinking as it differs between generations. The study was conducted between all adults—that is to say that the study used parents and their adult-age children.

Furnham, A., & Mak, T. (1999). Sex-role stereotyping in television commercials: A review and comparison of fourteen studies done on five continents over 25 years. *Sex Roles*, 41(5), 413-437. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com.jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/docview/225371288?accountid=10639>

This article discusses the ways in which television and television commercials influence society. In this case, it assesses the ways gender role stereotyping in American commercials influences society and then “trickles down” to other countries.

Sachs-Ericsson, N., & Ciarlo, J. A. (2000). Gender, social roles, and mental health: An epidemiological perspective. *Sex Roles*, 43(9), 605-628. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com.jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/docview/225378306?accountid=10639>

This article discusses the correlation between different gender roles and different psychiatric issues between genders. It also assesses in women the stress of being “put into a box” by their male counterparts within a society.

Sherman, J. (2009). Bend to avoid breaking: Job loss, gender norms, and family stability in rural america. *Social Problems*, 56(4), 599-620.

doi:<http://dx.doi.org.jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/10.1525/sp.2009.56.4.599>

This article discusses job-related gender roles and norms. The article looks at these norms from the point of view that predefined gender roles within relationships can cause tension when these roles do not hold up. It also discusses the changing gender roles within the workforce over time.

### **America: History & Life**

Brinton, M. C., & Lee, D. (2016). Gender-Role Ideology, Labor Market Institutions, and Post-industrial Fertility. *Population & Development Review*, 42(3), 405-433.

doi:10.1111/padr.161

This article discusses the correlation between the working and fertility within couples as well as income inequality and unemployment in men, a stark difference from the nuclear family of the baby boomer generation.

Perry, S. L. (2016). Spouse's Religious Commitment and Marital Quality: Clarifying the Role of Gender. *Social Science Quarterly (Wiley-Blackwell)*, 97(2), 476-490.  
doi:10.1111/ssqu.12224

This article discusses gender roles within religious marriages and the ways in which gender roles shape that relationship. It also includes a study that was conducted that shows positive outcomes when subjects were questioned with regards to being part of a couple versus examining themselves as individuals.

Rouse, A. (2016). "If Our Women Remain Pure": Bob Jones and the Construction of Gender in the New South, 1900-1925. *Proceedings of The South Carolina Historical Association*, 21-33. Retrieved from  
<http://jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ahl&AN=116895000&site=ehost-live>

This article discusses the ways in which women have been oppressed in the southern United States by the use of purity in the name of religion, which in turn kept male dominance intact in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Schreiber, R. (2016). Gender Roles, Motherhood, and Politics: Conservative Women's Organizations Frame Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann. *Journal Of Women, Politics & Policy*, 37(1), 1-23. doi:10.1080/1554477X.2016.1115319

This article discusses the views of conservative women on gender roles and the ways in which this plays out at the national level within the media—mainly toward prominent female politicians.

Whitehead Luskey, A., & Dunkerly, R. M. (2016). From Women's History to Gender History. *Civil War History*, 62(2), 149-169. Retrieved from  
<http://jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ahl&AN=114334891&site=ehost-live>

This article discusses the Richmond National Battlefield Park in Virginia specifically and how the tours and history presented there are perceived with regards to gender and feminism.

Fraser, G., Osborne, D., & Sibley, C. (2015). 'We want you in the Workplace, but only in a Skirt!' Social Dominance Orientation, Gender-Based Affirmative Action and the Moderating Role of Benevolent Sexism. *Sex Roles*, 73(5-6), 231-244.  
doi:10.1007/s11199-015-0515-8

This article discusses women in the work place and their perceived gender roles there. It also goes into detail about affirmative action for women in the work place and how this does not help the gender disparity as it reinforces perceived notions that women are in need of help and protection.

Halpern, H., & Perry-Jenkins, M. (2016). Parents' Gender Ideology and Gendered Behavior as Predictors of Children's Gender-Role Attitudes: A Longitudinal Exploration. *Sex Roles*, 74(11/12), 527-542. doi:10.1007/s11199-015-0539-0

This article discusses a study conducted through the self-reporting of families in the United States in which both parents work and their young children. Findings of the study show that children's attitudes toward gender roles come from the behavior of the parents rather than the ideology of the parents.

Siordia, C. (2016). On the Relationship between Gender Roles Attitudes, Religious Ideology and Familism in a Sample of Adults in the United States. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 17(4), 229-244. Retrieved from  
<http://jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=qth&AN=117366168&site=ehost-live>

This article discusses the ways in which family and religion influence gender roles and the attitudes thereof, especially in areas where there is a significant gender inequality.

Watkins, D. C., Patton, D. U., & Miller, R. J. (2016). Introduction to the Special Issue on the Intersections of Race, Gender, and Class in the Wake of a National Crisis. *Journal of Men's Studies*, 24(2), 119-129. doi:10.1177/1060826516641108

This article discusses gender roles as well as race and class within the context of and in response to the shootings of young African-American men in the past couple of years in the united states and how these factors have played a part in the events that have unfolded due to the shootings.

Zaikman, Y., Marks, M. J., Young, T. M., & Zeiber, J. A. (2016). Gender Role Violations and the Sexual Double Standard. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 63(12), 1608-1629.  
doi:10.1080/00918369.2016.1158007

This article discusses the double standard between men and women—namely the standard that women are viewed negatively and men positively for engaging in the same level of sexual interactions. The article discusses why it exists and if sexual orientation is a determining factor. It concluded that homosexual men have a similar experience to that of heterosexual women and homosexual women have a similar experience to that of heterosexual men, namely because of their violation of gender norms.

### **Websites**

**<http://feministmajority.org>**

This site features news articles about women in politics, with each article having reputable, well-known sources. The site also features an “About” page featuring the credentials of all of the site’s operators and administrators.

**<https://www.genderspectrum.org>**

This site, much like the first site, features a page with content about each of the site’s contributors. The information on this site is compiled by knowledgeable individuals and displays the current state of “gender” on each page and also offers a page on “Understanding Gender.”