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Change in the Role of American Women Through Radio and Television

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Change in the Role of American Women Through Radio and Television

by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of The College at Brockport, State University of New York, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science August, Six, Two Thousand and Fourteen.

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Historiography

The early development and mass use of the radio in 1920s America is a topic that has been widely researched and debated. The radio in the 1920s was considered to be the greatest invention known to man, and sparked a culture fascinated by technology. The radio united a nation, provided education to society, modernized America, promoted morality, saved business, created a consumer culture, and much more. Historians have drawn on primary documents including, government documents, journal and magazine articles, letters by consumers, radio station documents, and union notes, to further explore the impact of the radio on 1920s America. Some of the most debated topics include, how the radio became popular, targets organized by gender, what the radio did for Americans, how advertising became simultaneous with the radio, government influence on the development of the radio, and non-traditional alternatives to broadcasting. Historians have long drawn on their own original research, as well as, others to debate the topics related to the invention and commercialization of the radio, and its impact on an entire nation for the decade that would follow.

The introduction of the radio in 1920s America was almost an overnight sensation. Within two years the radio receiver sales had reached nearly \$60,000,000.00 and continued to rise each year following.¹ The question that has been much debated by historians is “How did the radio become so popular?”.

Communications historian Noah Arceneaux uses his monograph, *The Wireless in the Window: Department Stores and Radio Retailing in the 1920s*, to argue the point that

¹ Taylor, Timothy D.. "Music And The Rise Of Radio In 1920s America: Technological Imperialism, Socialization, And The Transformation Of Intimacy." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22: 429.

department store retailers staged a deliberate campaign to popularize the new technology.² Arceneaux argues that department stores made the radio extremely popular, by using old techniques based on new ideas to sell the technology. Department stores used education to play on the new idea that personal pride rest in the hands of the acquiring material goods, and no place better to acquire material goods, than a department store. Therefore, department stores are heavily responsible for the popularization of the radio. Arceneaux investigated what motivated consumers to buy the radio, other than the simple appeal of a new piece of technology. Arceneaux draws upon popular trade journals of the 1920s, including *Radio Dealer*, and *Radio News*, reports from the National Retail Dry Goods Association (NRDGA), as well as other primary sources, and scholarly works. Arceneaux presents information that supports the idea that department stores went above and beyond to entice consumers to purchase radios. Arceneaux incorporates substantial material regarding the educational aspect of the radio in department stores. In order for retailers to demonstrate and educate the consumer on the technology, the technology had to be readily available. Many department stores created their own broadcasting stations right in the store to provide consumer with an identical experience to the one in their home. Drawing on reports from the NRDGA, the association held a conference in April of 1922 that represented over 500 department store retailers. The NRDGA provided a twenty-four-page handbook on the best retail practices revolving solely around the radio.³ The pamphlet included advice to retailers on “what supplies to stock, how to advertise the device, and how to educate the public on broadcasting.”⁴ The NRDGA had put so much time

² Arceneaux, N.. "The Wireless in the Window: Department Stores and Radio Retailing in the 1920s." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 83: 581-595.

³ Arceneaux, "The Wireless in the Window: Department Stores and Radio Retailing in the 1920s," 584.

⁴ Arceneaux, "The Wireless in the Window: Department Stores and Radio Retailing in the 1920s," 584.

into research and development because they felt that retailers were crucial in exploiting the trade. Furthermore, the radio appeared at a time when society began to connect the ideas of personal pride and material goods.⁵ The consumer culture of holiday gift giving had been underway since the turn of the century, and had been even more exaggerated with the mass production of consumer good that had taken place during the First World War. Department stores capitalized and exploited the holidays as a way to increase sales on novel products. By the second decade of the 1900s department stores were aware that excessive consumerism around the holidays had become a social norm. Hence Christmas and other major holidays became a crucial time in the development of the popularization of the radio.⁶ However, the novelty of the radio did not taper off at the end of the Christmas season. Department stores continued to create a culture of consumption through perfectly arranged window displays that created the idea that technology was accepted as part of mainstream culture. Therefore, they continued to sell on the idea that material goods equated with personal fulfillment. Arceneaux places a large responsibility for the popularization of the radio in the hands of the department store. His conclusion is centered on the idea that department stores employed marketing techniques that had been influenced by already existing cultural beliefs. Therefore, Arceneaux cements the idea that “technologies and their uses are shaped by the cultures in which they develop,”⁷ in this case the culture centered on material goods equaling personal fulfillment.

Timothy D. Taylor’s *Music and the Rise of the Radio in 1920s America: technological imperialism, socialization, and the transformation of intimacy*, argues a different point on who and/or what to credit with the popularization of the radio. Taylor does not focus on where the

⁵ Arceneaux, "The Wireless in the Window: Department Stores and Radio Retailing in the 1920s," 590.

⁶ Arceneaux, "The Wireless in the Window: Department Stores and Radio Retailing in the 1920s," 587.

⁷ Arceneaux, "The Wireless in the Window: Department Stores and Radio Retailing in the 1920s," 590.

technology came from, instead on what came out of the technology. Taylor credits music as being one of the most important factors in the popularization of the radio. Taylor's research considers the very beginning of the development of the radio, and what was said in regards to the technology. Furthermore, he explores the role music played in popularizing the radio. Taylor points out that most research fails to acknowledge the way technology comes into social existence. It is often a drawn out process that is hard to pinpoint specific factors, however, his research focuses on that process. Taylor also acknowledges that research done on the radio and 1920s America, tends to stem from advertisement as the means of popularizing the radio. Taylor on the other hand, highlights the importance that music played in pushing the radio into mainstream society.⁸ Taylor begins his argument with the exploration of radio technology and how it was marketed to society. The radio was said to unify, uplift, and provide news and weather, as well as education. However, these marketable attributes did not leave consumers ready to rush out and buy radio receivers. It would be those who were initially listening to the radio that would go out to promote their technology. This group consisted mainly of radio hobbyists who were looking to spread their fascination with mainstream society.⁹ Taylor draws on popular magazines of the time including *Radio Digest* and *Radio World*, to describe how hobbyists went about promoting their interest. Letters to the magazines by hobbyists often told stories of rather normal events such as how they were being installed everywhere from hotels to baby carriages, as well as seemingly outlandish events including the radio to entice the

⁸ Taylor, "Music And The Rise Of Radio In 1920s America: Technological Imperialism, Socialization, And The Transformation Of Intimacy," 425.

⁹ Taylor, "Music And The Rise Of Radio In 1920s America: Technological Imperialism, Socialization, And The Transformation Of Intimacy," 430.

consumer. Radio Digest reported “a hoopskirt had been successfully used as an antenna”.¹⁰

This type of promotion is what Taylor claims to be as part of the long process of bringing technology into society. Americans in the 1920s needed to first find reasons to use the radio in their everyday lives before the radio could truly be popularized.

Hobbyist may have brought the radio into the public arena, but it was the music that kept their attention. With an increase in radios around the country, everywhere from barber shops to funeral homes, the stage was set for Americans to thoroughly enjoy what was coming out of the technology. The abundance of different types of music allowed for the radio to entice all types of Americans. Once popular organ grinders were replaced by radio barrels, communities in Lancaster, PA took an unusual liking to opera music, and “even some cowboys employed the radio for singing their cattle to sleep.”¹¹ Taylor argues that the radio itself began to “shape peoples’ experience with music and entertainment more generally.”¹² Peoples’ perception of public and private had changed because they began to hear what was once considered to be a very public thing, music in this case, in the privacy of their very own living rooms. Music in the home allowed for people to live out all of their fantasies because Americans felt that even though the broadcast was being heard in millions of other homes, the singer was still speaking directly to them. The intimacy of music in the home was perceived by Americans as almost a spiritual experience.¹³ Taylor argues that the change in perception of

¹⁰ Taylor, “Music And The Rise Of Radio In 1920s America: Technological Imperialism, Socialization, And The Transformation Of Intimacy,” 430.

¹¹ Taylor, “Music And The Rise Of Radio In 1920s America: Technological Imperialism, Socialization, And The Transformation Of Intimacy,” 431.

¹² Taylor, “Music And The Rise Of Radio In 1920s America: Technological Imperialism, Socialization, And The Transformation Of Intimacy,” 440.

¹³ Taylor, “Music And The Rise Of Radio In 1920s America: Technological Imperialism, Socialization, And The Transformation Of Intimacy,” 439.

intimacy that music had brought into American homes is a significant factor in helping to have popularized the radio in 1920s America.

In terms of the popularization of the radio, and its contributing factors, Reynold M. Wik takes a different approach when narrowing down what caused the radio to become a sensation. Wik limits his study to focus specifically on the radio in rural America in the 1920s. One of Wik's main arguments is that the radio became so popularized in rural America, because it was rural Americans who had the most to gain from the communication device. Farmers in 1920s America popularized the radio in the rural areas of the country primarily based on a practical standpoint on the radio. The radio was a contributing factor to saving American farms. With the development of the radio, farmers gained access to weather reports more than a day earlier than they would have through print. In addition, the weather reports were often more accurate and more detailed than reports printed in the newspaper.¹⁴ Farmers were able to adequately prepare their farms in accordance to the weather. Wik draws on the 1923 annual report from Henry C. Wallace, secretary of agriculture, to highlight his point that the radio was extremely beneficial to farmers. "[Wallace] asserts that this service had saved Illinois farmers over ten million dollars during the year, while over a million dollars in livestock had been saved in Arkansas by means of radio flood warnings."¹⁵ In addition to weather reports, Wik argues that radio reports helped farmers receive a fair price for their goods. Often when buyers came out to the farms, they could essentially tell farmers any market value of crops they wanted. Farmers could not receive printed reports every day, and were often behind on the true value

¹⁴ Wik, Reynold. "The Radio in Rural America during the 1920s." *Agricultural History* 55: 341.

¹⁵ Wik, "The Radio in Rural America during the 1920s," 342.

of their goods.¹⁶ Farmers also benefited from the radio because of the quality source of education it provided to farmers. Broadcasters realized that it was not beneficial to farmers to provide them with programs on the assumption that they were uneducated “hicks”. Broadcasters realized that farmers wanted quality educational programming, and they delivered.¹⁷ Farmers often wrote in to stations asking questions that would be beneficial to them, and stations answered with accurate information that had been thoroughly researched. Aside from the practical aspects of the radio, like saving the American farm, the technology became popularized in rural America in the 1920s because it kept people on farms. Wik argues that radio was seen as a cure to the isolation that rural Americans faced in the 1920s. “People thought the radio would keep young people on the farm. It would reduce the boredom of those isolated in lonely places and thus preserve the family farm.”¹⁸ The entertainment aspect of the radio was seen as an escape from the hard work that farmers put into their days, and seen as a connection to the outside world, as well as a connector of the family. Wik’s, *The Radio in Rural America During the 1920s*, argues that the radio in rural America in the 1920s was popularized because of the practical benefits it provided to farmers and their families. Essentially, the benefits that the radio provided to rural communities saved farms, and kept people farming.

Susan Smulyan’s *Radio Advertising to Women in Twenties America: “A Latchkey to Every Home,”* discusses the popularization of the radio in the home by narrowing down her research group to women. Smulyan includes a great deal of information regarding the debate between broadcasters and advertisers. Broadcasters were looking for a way to make a profit on their

¹⁶ Wik, “The Radio in Rural America during the 1920s,” 342.

¹⁷ Wik, “The Radio in Rural America during the 1920s,” 345.

¹⁸ Wik, “The Radio in Rural America during the 1920s,” 346.

industry, and advertising was the vehicle to do so. Advertisers, however, were skeptical of investing their money into daytime radio broadcasts, because women were the predominate listeners of the radio throughout the day. Old fears of women as consumers came to a head once again in the age of radio. Advertisers did not feel that women had enough finances, or enough say in their families finances to become sufficient targets for radio advertising.¹⁹ Smulyan's research points out that radio became popularized in the realm of women, because broadcasters pushed their way into their homes, as a way to please advertisers. Essentially, radio broadcasting stations deliberately changed daytime radio to appeal to women, in order to prove to advertisers that daytime radio was a profitable advertising spot.²⁰ When daytime programming changed, the number of advertisers increased, along with the number of women listening. Radio broadcasters changed radio "from a boy's toy and a male controlled entertainment medium into an instructional tool staffed by home economists in order to enter the home during the day and sell to women."²¹ Broadcasters began airing educational programming taught by home economists on tasks done by women on a daily basis, for instance, proper ironing procedure, or how to correctly hem pants or skirts. While women were being instructed, advertisers were promoting their products in a non-intrusive way. By introducing radio personalities such as, Betty Crocker, and Aunt Sammy, advertisers were building an audience, and providing a comforting and warm friend to American women, that they eagerly welcomed into their homes. The advertising tactics used were not concentrated to one area of the country, or specific to women in urban or rural settings, radio personalities

¹⁹ Smulyan, Susan. "Radio Advertising to Women in Twenties America: 'A Latchkey to Every Home'." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 13: 2.

²⁰ Smulyan, "Radio Advertising to Women in Twenties America: 'A Latchkey to Every Home,'" 14.

²¹ Smulyan, "Radio Advertising to Women in Twenties America: 'A Latchkey to Every Home,'" 7.

influenced women throughout the entire country. "On 4 October, 1926, 50 women in 50 radio stations across the county became 'Aunt Sammy'".²² Smulyan points out that by changing the format of radio to counter advertisers fears of women as consumers, broadcasters contributed to the popularization of radio in 1920s America. The profits gained from daytime radio advertising allowed for radio programming to flourish, and provide women listeners with the daytime radio programming they wanted.

While the debate over how the radio became popularized is one that turns up in a lot of historical research done on the impact of radio in 1920s America, the topic of gender is one that also makes many appearances. While the questions by scholars remain the same, Who aided in the development of popularization of the radio?, Who were broadcasters and advertisers targeting in the 1920s?, and Who was most impacted by the development of the radio?, the answer to these questions regarding gender, differ significantly amongst scholars. Timothy D. Taylor states that it was the help of male hobbyists who brought the radio into everyday 1920s American life. On the other hand, Susan Smulyan argues that women were the targets of advertising, and therefore aided in the popularization of the radio.

Taylor argues that music is what contributed to the popularization of the radio; however, he claims that music did not have the ability to influence the public until male hobbyists introduced the radio into everyday life.²³ Taylor states that the original group of listeners contained a small amount of males who had either worked with radios in WWI, young men who were fascinated with being able to pick up broadcasts from long distances.²⁴ While

²² Smulyan, "Radio Advertising to Women in Twenties America: 'A Latchkey to Every Home'," 9.

²³ Taylor, "Music And The Rise Of Radio In 1920s America: Technological Imperialism, Socialization, And The Transformation Of Intimacy," 440.

²⁴ Taylor, "Music And The Rise Of Radio In 1920s America: Technological Imperialism, Socialization, And The Transformation Of Intimacy," 430.

the radio developed on its own, people were enticed by popular events such as the 1920 presidential race, or the Jack Dempsey- George Carpenter boxing match, Taylor argues that the thrust of radio into people's everyday lives, was due to male hobbyists actively looking to convert people into radio "believers".²⁵ Thus, Taylor's research claims that males played a large role in the popularization of the radio in 1920s America.

To shed light on the opposite standpoint, Susan Smulyan argues that women played a pivotal role in the commercialization of the radio, as well as were greatly impacted by the radio in the 1920s. Broadcasters and advertisers looked to target women to make a profit; meanwhile, they introduced women to a new way of living. Advertisers pushed for the commercialization of the home, women's main sphere of influence.²⁶ By introducing characters and products that women could relate to they succeeded in doing so. Women were highly impacted by daytime radio and the new commercialization that came with it. In turn, Smulyan argues that "the commercialization of the home and the construction of women as consumers were important steps in the evolution of the culture of consumption."²⁷ Smulyan's research ultimately points to the fact that women were so deeply impacted by radio in the 1920s, they changed the culture of America.

Another topic that continued to appear consistently throughout the exploration of the radio and its impact on 1920s America is advertising and its role in the early development of the radio. Researchers have agreed that advertising played a critical role in the development, commercialization, and the popularization of the radio in the 1920s. When examining research

²⁵ Taylor, "Music And The Rise Of Radio In 1920s America: Technological Imperialism, Socialization, And The Transformation Of Intimacy," 430.

²⁶ Smulyan, "Radio Advertising to Women in Twenties America: 'A Latchkey to Every Home,'" 6.

²⁷ Smulyan, "Radio Advertising to Women in Twenties America: 'A Latchkey to Every Home,'" 6.

regarding advertising, the only topic that seems to be highly debated, is who advertisers targeted. As discussed earlier, these targets were usually divided between male and female.

In general, scholars have agreed that advertising was crucial in the development and commercialization of the radio. In the early days of radio, broadcasting stations began to wonder how they would make a profit in their industry. After a short period of experimentation, it was clear that advertising would be the key to making money. Scholars concur that advertisers were not initially convinced that radio was the right outlet for them. However, when convinced, most advertisers went about their advertising in the same way. Whether it be over broadcast or in the store, every scholar discussed in this essay has agreed that education was the key to selling and commercializing the radio.

Noah Arceneaux argues that department stores deliberately staged a campaign to popularize radio technology. Arceneaux also argues that department stores accomplished this through education. Department stores looked to relay to the consumer that radio technology could be easily incorporated into their homes.²⁸ Department stores went above and beyond to ensure that every aspect of the radio, any questions or concerns could be covered right in the store. "Retailers arranged public demonstrations, exhibitions, classes, lectures, and set-building contests"²⁹, these accommodations ensured consumers they would be comfortable with the technology inside their own homes. The comfortability allowed for the new technology to be non-threatening, thus welcomed into the home of the consumer.

Broadcasting stations used education for advertising in a different way to help to promote the radio. Whereas retailers were using education to sell radios, advertisers were

²⁸ Arceneaux, "The Wireless in the Window: Department Stores and Radio Retailing in the 1920s," 585.

²⁹ Arceneaux, "The Wireless in the Window: Department Stores and Radio Retailing in the 1920s," 585.

using education over the radio to sell products. Both Smulyan and Wik claim that advertisers used spots to control not only commercials, but programming as well. Advertisers used programming to educate consumers on the products available to them. For instance “Aunt Sammy’s” daily spot is revolving around how to wash clothes properly, the programming is teaching women how to wash clothes properly, however, the advertiser is teaching women to use their brand for the best results.³⁰ Americans were being educated in a whole new way, through radio, however, they were also being bombarded by advertising. Wik explains in his research that one of the appeals of the radio was that people could shop outside of their local stores.³¹ Americans were presented with new products, as well, as detailed information on how to use those products. Radio advertising created a reason for people to want to shop outside of their local stores, seeking newly introduced products, thus creating an entirely new American 1920s culture.

The topic of advertising leads to another topic that is frequently discussed throughout this research; the impact that the radio and its advertisers had on the American people of the 1920s. Smulyan and Taylor agree, that radio and the advertising industry transformed 1920s America, into a commercialized and modern culture of consumers. Radio broadcasting stations were forced to continue to push advertisements on the air because that was their means of profit and their lifeline to continue to broadcast. In order for advertising to be worthwhile, Americans needed to want to buy the goods advertised. Therefore advertisers needed to create a culture that Americans wanted to be part of, they created the consumer culture. Taylor argues that the introduction of the radio is the first time in the American experience, that

³⁰ Smulyan, "Radio Advertising to Women in Twenties America: 'A Latchkey to Every Home'," 9.

³¹ Wik, "The Radio in Rural America during the 1920s," 346.

society considered themselves to be modern.³² This was a result of the development of the radio and the advertising that came with it.

Noah Arceneaux on the other hand, argues that development of the radio and its advertisers did not create a consumer culture, they simply capitalized and on what already existed. Arceneaux states that because of the boom in production leading up to and throughout WWI, a consumer culture had already been created. Because of the increase in employment prior to the United States entrance into WWI, and the fact that the United States had produced more than ever throughout the war, people had money to spend, and wanted goods to buy. Arceneaux argues that the radio had made its debut in a time when people associated personal fulfillment with material goods, and manufacturers and advertisers exploited the already existing culture of consumption, they did not create it with the radio.³³

The last topic that continues to appear in research on the radio in 1920s America, is why the radio became the sensation that it did. Randall Patnode's *Path Not Taken: Wired Wireless and Broadcasting in the 1920s*, and Steven Phipps' *The Commercial Development of Short Wave Radio in the United States, 1920-1926*, agree that radio broadcasting was not the perfect piece of technology. Yet, regardless of the quirks that it had, it still was able to thrive in 1920s society.

Patnode argues that there were three main problems with radio broadcasting. The first problem was that a loud hissing static traveled through receivers. The second problem was the fact that listeners often experienced interruptions by stations broadcasting over the same frequency. The third problem was that in the early stages of development, stations did not

³² Taylor, "Music And The Rise Of Radio In 1920s America: Technological Imperialism, Socialization, And The Transformation Of Intimacy," 426.

³³ Arceneaux, "The Wireless in the Window: Department Stores and Radio Retailing in the 1920s," 590.

know how they would be able to turn a profit on the technology.³⁴ Patnode's research explores an idea created by Major George O. Squire, an electrical engineer for the United States Army. Patnode argues that Squire's idea of "Wired Wireless", a wire system that carried radio transmissions through already existing telephone and electrical lines, would have solved all three problems that traditional broadcasting presented.³⁵ However, Patnode argues that Wired Wireless was never explored to its fullest potential by any of the two major communication companies, AT&T and RCA, because of legal battles, business plans, and patent restrictions.³⁶ The restrictions that these two major communication companies faced, are what Patnode argues as being the reason that no one, or no thing, ever challenged traditional broadcasting, thus the imperfect system was allowed to thrive free of competition.

Phipps also sheds light on an alternative to the early days of radio broadcasting that did not initially catch on in 1920s America. Phipps argues that the introduction of short wave radio had the potential of surpassing traditional broadcasting in the early days of radio development. Short wave broadcasting would allow for one broadcasting station to reach the entire country and broadcast simultaneously.³⁷ This would have been ideal for communication companies because it would have greatly reduce the production costs for each stations, which ultimately was the goal of these companies. However, in order for a short wave superstation to have been created and reach the entire nation, consumers would have been required to purchase a new receiver and antenna to receive the broadcast. Companies such as AT&T and later NBC felt the disruption to the already growing standard radio receiver would not be worth the initial

³⁴ Patnode, Randall. "Path Not Taken: Wired Wireless and Broadcasting in the 1920s." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 49: 383.

³⁵ Patnode, "Path Not Taken: Wired Wireless and Broadcasting in the 1920s," 387.

³⁶ Patnode, "Path Not Taken: Wired Wireless and Broadcasting in the 1920s," 393.

³⁷ Phipps, Steven. "The Commercial Development of the Short Wave Radio in the United States, 1920-1926." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 11: 12.

involvement with short wave radio.³⁸ Phipps and Patnode argue that the traditional broadcasting radio at the early stages of development went unchallenged, and allowed the technology to thrive.

Research has shown that in the exploration of the radio in 1920s America many topics have been debated. These topics range from who helped to popularize the radio, and what role advertisers played in the commercialization of the radio, to why the radio, an imperfect technology was able to flourish. However, one thing that each scholar can agree on, is that the radio linked the nation together. Distance was no longer an obstacle in life. What I feel is missing from much of the research is how the radio standardized the nation. If the radio linked communities together in 1920s America, what were some of the greatest links? Did one culture or region of the nation influence the rest? Or were pieces taken from each region to create one American culture? If so what are those pieces? And how did the radio aid in spreading those pieces?

Introduction

The twenty first century has been deemed “the age of technology”. It is a time of connectivity, “an era of one”, where independence and privacy is scarce, and original thought is rescinding more and more into the distant past. The internet takes credit for this connectivity; you can seek answers in New York, and find them in California, without ever having left your living room. Geographic barriers are not factors in gaining any type of information; the internet has flattened any barrier that may have existed. However, the internet cannot receive all the

³⁸ Phipps, "The Commercial Development of the Short Wave Radio in the United States, 1920-1926," 12.

credit for this breakdown. The foundation lays in a piece of technology that existed long before the internet was even conceptualized. That invention is the radio.

The internet may have flattened geographic barriers in the United States, however, the radio significantly smoothed the barriers out. The radio made the United States one nation. Southern food became “American Cuisine”, and a signature American sound was created. Music that was once only significant in Harlem, New York, could now be cherished in New Orleans, Louisiana. Furthermore, language accents that were prominent in specific areas of the United States were smoothed over and mashed together to form one specific American sound that was broadcast throughout the nation.

The radio changed nearly every aspect of American life, socially, politically, and economically. Furthermore, the radio played a major role in helping to shape the United States to become the nation that it is today, a nation of connectivity, a nation of one. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the ways in which the radio, and later television both changed and mirrored American society and culture during the pivotal mid-twentieth century years. Especially as they both reflected and accelerated change in women’s lives and roles. The radio changed politics, religion, consumer culture, social interactions and activities, the concept of American celebrity, and the consumption of information as a whole.

The development of the radio changed the way the American public gained information, and in turn what they did with the information they had obtained. Americans across the country began to have access to information that was crucial to their personal lives and livelihood, such as weather and the price of goods in regards to their crops, as well as

information that affected the general public beyond their surrounding areas.³⁹The access to this new information created a new paradox in the United States, personal autonomy verses standardization. On the one hand, the access to information provided Americans the ability to take in a new idea or concept and process it in their own terms. The new information provoked thought and inner dialog at a much more rapid pace than it once had. The radio enabled the expansion of an inner dialogue with one's self.⁴⁰ Prior to the development and mass distribution of the radio, American citizens concentrated on what was immediately around them. Particularly in the rural parts of the country, people focused primarily on their livelihood and their religion. The radio allowed outside information to penetrate their consciousness. Whether that outside information be in regards to politics, entertainment, consumerism, or simply the amazement about the technology itself, information that may have not crossed American minds so frequently, could now be accessed and processed much more rapidly and personally. The radio provided information that was no longer considered to be hearsay or gossip, the radio provided what was thought to be valid information that people could mull over and form their own opinions on.⁴¹ Twenty-first century American culture believes to a certain extent, that the internet has made Americans "smarter", information at the click of a button, however, the radio was the first invention to really open a dialogue between one person and another, but also between one person and themselves. Ideas breed ideas, and the development and mass distribution of the radio contributed to the onset of the technological explosion that was soon to follow in the United States, as well as a nation that prides itself on

³⁹ Wik, "The Radio in Rural America during the 1920s," 344.

⁴⁰ Lenthall, Bruce. "Radio's America." Radio's America: The Great Depression and the Rise of Modern Mass Culture.

⁴¹ Lenthall, Bruce. "Radio's America." Radio's America: The Great Depression and the Rise of Modern Mass Culture.

individual thought and speech, by opening the lines if dialoged from one American to another, as well as one American and themselves.

As much as the radio provoked original thought, it also created standardization among Americans. The development of the radio allowed for Americans across the nation to receive the same information, however that contributed to a problem, Americans across the nation were receiving the same information. Housewives across the nation were tuning into the same soap operas, hearing the same commercials, and were receiving the same household tips. Radio programing such as "The Betty Crocker School of the Air," aired to women nationwide, and was used as a tool to provide more loving, well-run, structured homes.⁴² As the show became more of an afternoon hit with women across the nation, their kitchens and their family structure became more standardized. The recipes provided by the show, became household staples, as well as American staples. Classic cake and frosting recipes that were once provided via radio, can now be found on any grocery store shelf in America. The creation of the character itself, was aimed at a wide range of American women, the name Betty was seen as a non-threatening, average name that many women could relate to, regardless of what part of the country you were living in.⁴³ Betty Crocker was not the only radio contribution to the standardization of America, as radio programs grew; sponsorship of those programs did as well. As sponsorship increased, those who controlled the information that was being put out through the radio waves began to decrease. Radio broadcasters were faced with a dilemma, how to expand your thoughts and ideas through the radio without being censored by networks and sponsorship. Sponsors looked to expand their audiences, and looked for programs that could

⁴² "Betty Crocker | Old Time Radio." Betty Crocker | Old Time Radio.

⁴³ "Betty Crocker | Old Time Radio." Betty Crocker | Old Time Radio.

relate to the greatest number of Americans as possible. The term “soap”opera comes from the fact that soap and detergent companies paid to have their products advertised throughout afternoon radio programming.⁴⁴ The programs that were most popular with audiences, would receive the most sponsorship. As the nation grew larger, and the radio was able to touch more and more people, it seemed as though individuals became smaller and smaller. Individuality was replaced by “target groups” who began to crave the same materials; “Lucy” in New York, and “Connie” in Seattle wanted to use the same “Arm and Hammer” clothing detergent, because Betty Crocker said you were not being the best homemaker you could be without it. The more standardized American culture became, the more people believed in and trusted the information coming through their radio sets.

From Radio to Television

The transition from radio to television in the United States happened very rapidly. This rapid change in informational and entertaining technology aided in my decision to segue from one medium to the next. Popularization of the radio began mid-year of 1920. The technology that had begun to connect the nation grew promptly due to many factors. Contributors range from department stores, to hobbyists, to broadcasting stations, to advertisers. Regardless of the source of popularization, the piece of technology boomed in the early to mid-twentieth century.

⁴⁴ Smulyan, "Radio Advertising to Women in Twenties America: 'A Latchkey to Every Home!,'" 14.

Within the first ten years of the introduction of the radio, the number of radio receivers had jumped from 60,000 to 13,000,000.⁴⁵ For almost the next twenty years, the radio continued to flourish from an amateur informational medium into a full blown entertainment medium centered on broadcasting networks and advertisers. In 1948, radio advertising revenues had reached \$210 million, a total of 1,062 radio stations existed across the nation, 97% of them affiliated with broadcasting networks. In addition, 94% of households in America owned a radio.⁴⁶

While the radio numbers were astonishing, the television industry was creeping up on the technology and would soon surpass the medium as the most used piece of technology in terms of news and entertainment. At the 1939 World's Fair, RCA revealed their new NBC Television studio in Rockefeller Plaza; CBS would soon follow suit⁴⁷, and the birth of a new technological sensation began.

In 1948, less than 1% of Americans owned a television. In 1952, the number had jumped to 34%. In 1954, the number was 55%⁴⁸, and in 1960, 85% of United States households owned a television.⁴⁹ The initial challenges of the popularization of the television were eventually outweighed by the benefits. Costs were higher across the board in the television industry and advertisers were skeptical to put more of their money into smaller audiences. However, the fact that television watching required a dark, quiet room, made audiences perfect consumer

⁴⁵ Arceneaux, "The Wireless in the Window: Department Stores and Radio Retailing in the 1920s," 582.

⁴⁶ Meyers, Cynthia. "Radio with Pictures: How the Ad Industry in the 1940s Debated the Transition from Radio to TV." Academia.edu. http://www.academia.edu/3105183/Radio_with_Pictures_How_the_Ad_Industry_in_the_1940s_Debated_the_Transition_from_Radio_to_TV (accessed June 21, 2014).

⁴⁷ "TV History." Capturing TV History Through Video Interviews. <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/resources/tv-history> (accessed June 15, 2014).

⁴⁸ Meyers, Cynthia. "Radio with Pictures: How the Ad Industry in the 1940s Debated the Transition from Radio to TV." Academia.edu.

⁴⁹ "History of Communications - Historical Periods in Television Technology: 1930-1959." History of Communications - Historical Periods in Television Technology: 1930-1959. <http://transition.fcc.gov/omd/history/tv/1930-1959.html> (accessed June 20, 2014).

targets.⁵⁰ The distractions that were once available while listening to the radio, father reading the newspaper, mother stitching and sewing, were eliminated when watching television.⁵¹ The cost to produce television shows were much higher than radio shows, sets, makeup, and wardrobes⁵², added hefty costs to networks, however, the risk proved to be worth the reward.

In 1949, four million TV sets were produced, dropping the price 1/3 over two years down to \$200.⁵³ The affordability of the television set made it a luxury that was not out of reach to many. In addition, the TV was introduced to the public in one of the most affluent periods of American history. The disposable income that was available was perfectly placed to allow for the television to overtake the radio as the most popular means of communication and entertainment. In 1950, there were already ninety-eight television stations and networks like Universal, Warner Brothers, and Paramount were appropriating more funds towards their television stations than their radio stations.⁵⁴ Radio dramas that were once networks bread and butter, fell to the wayside of television dramas, and people tuned in. "Radio, as we know, shifted from providing national network commercial entertainment programming sponsored by national advertisers into a more local advertising platform, focused on cheaper program formats, such as music and talk. So, radio did not die, but it changed."⁵⁵

As more money was put into TV advertising, and more people could afford television sets, the use of the radio and its popularity began to decrease. The average daily radio usage had dropped in 1960 to less than two hours a day. Television usage on the other hand, had

⁵⁰ Meyers, Cynthia. "Radio with Pictures: How the Ad Industry in the 1940s Debated the Transition from Radio to TV." Academia.edu.

⁵¹ Meyers, Cynthia. "Radio with Pictures: How the Ad Industry in the 1940s Debated the Transition from Radio to TV." Academia.edu.

⁵² Meyers, Cynthia. "Radio with Pictures: How the Ad Industry in the 1940s Debated the Transition from Radio to TV." Academia.edu.

⁵³ "History of American Radio: Melodrama, Adaptation and Comedy." History of American Radio: Melodrama, Adaptation and Comedy. http://www.psu.edu/dept/inart10_110/inart10/radio.html (accessed June 15, 2014).

⁵⁴ "History of American Radio: Melodrama, Adaptation and Comedy." History of American Radio: Melodrama, Adaptation and Comedy.

⁵⁵ Meyers, Cynthia. "Radio with Pictures: How the Ad Industry in the 1940s Debated the Transition from Radio to TV." Academia.edu

increased to five hours a day, and would increase an additional twenty-three minutes from 1960 to 1965.⁵⁶ Television stations were now producing radio shows with pictures, and some of the most well-known and longest running shows began right as the television itself had begun. “Meet the Press” premiered in Washington D.C. in 1947, and has been the longest running news television show in history. The Ed Sullivan Show premiered in 1948 and will live forever as the show that showcased Elvis’ pelvic gyrations and introduced The Beatles to America. In 1950, E.L Deckinger stated “Radio will never die—it will become television as a natural ‘next step’”.⁵⁷ Deckinger was right, radio changed and morphed into television, and Americans welcomed the natural progression. Television captivated audiences and still does today. It is an outlet for new and creative expression. TV can also be used as an archive of time, for what is being presented to its audience, is a reflection of the time in which they live.

Historical Timeline

The turn of the Twentieth Century brought about enormous change for women in the United States. At the time, dependent upon who you asked, the victories for the Women’s Movement could be viewed as either large or small, however, there is no doubt today, that those victories through the twentieth century laid the foundation for an almost unrecognizable world in the twenty-first century. While the evolution of women’s roles in society may not have been as obvious while the change was occurring, looking back on those events, media outlets such as radio and television have archived those changes, and have allowed Americans to view

⁵⁶ Thompson, Robert. "The year of transition: 1959." Encyclopedia Britannica Online. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1513870/Television-in-the-United-States/283614/The-year-of-transition-1959> (accessed June 14, 2014).

⁵⁷ Meyers, Cynthia. "Radio with Pictures: How the Ad Industry in the 1940s Debated the Transition from Radio to TV." Academia.edu.

those changes nearly a century later. Television sitcoms such as *"Bewitched"* mirrored the changes in American society in regards to gender roles throughout some of the most profoundly life altering times of the twentieth century. Americans may not have noticed such profound change when they looked in the mirror in the morning, however, when they looked at their television screens in the evening, the evolution of gender roles in American society was staring them straight in the eye.

The timeline below was developed from the website of the National Women's History Project (<http://www.nwhp.org>), an organization that focuses on "writing women back into history". I have chosen to incorporate a timeline focusing around women's history, not because I do not feel as though men's role in society did not change, but because it was women who had much to gain and the change more profound. On television, as in society, women were stepping out from their primary domain of the home, where men made the majority of the decisions but performed less of the work, and into a more assertive and self-advocating domain, even if they did not necessarily head into the work force.

1900-1920:

In 1916, Margret Sanger, a birth control advocate laid the foundation for what would later become Planned Parenthood. In 1918 Sanger won the Supreme Court case *New York v. Sanger*, which would "allow doctors to advise their married patients about birth control for health purposes."

In 1920, the nineteenth amendment to the United States Constitution is ratified and declares "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by

the United States or by any State on account of sex.” For the first time in United States history, by law, women are granted the right to vote.

1921-1940:

In 1932, many women working in the governmental work force are forced to leave their job due to the National Recovery Act. This act forbade more than one family member to be working in a government position.

In 1936, contraceptives and information regarding contraceptives were removed from the Comstock Act, which prohibited the mailing and importation of obscene materials, with the Supreme Court case of *The United States v. One Package of Japanese Pessaries*. The victory in this case approved the medicinal use of birth control.

In 1938, minimum wage is established without regards to gender with the passing of the Fair Labor Standards Act. This act is the first semblance of equal opportunity in the workplace that women in the United States have.

1941-1960:

Between 1941 and 1945, nearly six million women enter the United States work force to aid in the efforts of WWII. The government’s motto was “There’s not a job a woman cannot do”.⁵⁸

In 1947, the Supreme Court case *Fay v. New York*, rules that women are equally as capable as men to serve on a jury, however, could be granted an exemption if the woman chooses to do so.

1961-1980

⁵⁸ Berg, Barbara J.. *Sexism in America alive, well, and ruining our future*. Chicago, Ill.: Lawrence Hill Books, 2009, 3.

In 1961, the Supreme Court rules in *Hoyt v. Florida*, to uphold the law originated in Florida that made it less likely that women would be called to serve jury duty than men. The justification was that a “woman is still regarded as the center of home and family life.”

In 1963, the Equal Pay Act is enacted, “prohibit[ing] discrimination on account of sex in the payment of wages by employers engaged in commerce or the production of goods for commerce”.⁵⁹

In 1964, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act is ratified; the act “prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin.”⁶⁰

In 1965, the Supreme Court overturns a ruling in one of the last states that prohibited married couple’s use of prescription contraceptives in *Griswold v. Connecticut*.

In 1968, via Executive Order 11246, President Johnson orders the requirement of affirmative action plans for hiring women.

In 1969, the courts rules that if they could meet the physical requirements, many women could now hold jobs that were previously only available to men in the case *Bowe v. Colgate-Palmolive Company*.

In 1971, it becomes illegal, with the case of *Phillips v. Martin Marietta Corporation*, for private employers to refuse to hire women with pre-school aged children.

In 1972, Congress passes the Title IX section of the Education Amendments. Title IX prohibits gender discrimination in all federally funded educational programs.

⁵⁹ "Equal Employment Opportunity Commission - EEOC Home Page." . <http://www.eeoc.gov/> (accessed March 10, 2014).

⁶⁰ "Equal Employment Opportunity Commission - EEOC Home Page."

Additionally, the Supreme Court rules in the case of Eisenstadt v. Baird. This case rules that unmarried person's have the right to use contraceptives, and would be protected by their right to privacy.

In 1973, the Supreme Court rules that women would be protected by the United States Constitution in their right to choose to terminate an early pregnancy. The case of Rowe v. Wade is perhaps one of the most famous court cases surrounding women's rights in the United States.

In 1974, Cleveland Board of Education v. LaFleur, determines that it "it is illegal to force pregnant women to take maternity leave on the assumption they are incapable of working in their physical condition."

The Women's Educational Equity Act, funds programs to promote full educational opportunities for females.

Finally, a triangular decree is signed by Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Justice and Labor Departments, and a major telecom company banning unfair practices towards minority groups, women included.

In 1975, it is deemed unconstitutional to exclude women from juries.

In 1978, it becomes illegal for employers to discriminate against pregnant women with the Pregnancy Discrimination Act.

1981-2000:

In 1984, the Supreme Court rules that law firms across the nation may not discriminate based on gender, when determining promotional partnerships.

In 1986, with *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*, the Supreme Court “held that a hostile or abusive work environment can prove discrimination based on sex.”

In 1989, the Supreme Court rules in favor of the states to deny public funded abortions, as well as ban hospitals ability to perform abortions.

In 1993, the Family Medical Leave Act goes into effect. This states that’s if you have worked 1,250 hours in the year, you are entitled to certain benefits when taking a leave of absence from work.

In 1994, the Gender Equity in Education Act, promotes math and science in the classroom to females, counseling for pregnant teenagers, and sexual harassment prevention.

Additionally, the Violence Against Women Act funds services for women in crisis due to domestic abuse and rape.

In 1998, Title IX is expands and the Supreme Court rules “that college athletics programs must actively involve roughly equal numbers of men and women to qualify for federal support.”

In 2000, the CBS Broadcasting Company settles a sexual discrimination suit with 200 women, by paying out \$8 Million.

While massive changes for women were taking place across the country, the days of the family sitting around listening to the radio were being replaced by families gathering around their television sets eating TV dinners. Furthermore, while changes for women began to increase at a more rapid rate, particularly between the years of 1960 and 1975, Americans were able to view these changes right in their own living rooms.

As I began to transition from radio to television, and began to reflect on the pivotal times in American history, I asked questions of myself, as well as, the people around me. I

thought of sitcoms that I had heard of, *I Love Lucy*, *The Jefferson's*, etc., however, I did not know much about them. Having grown up in an era in which television and technology are as American as apple pie, I knew these television shows were iconic, yet they seemed so foreign to me at the same time. I am very fortunate that the basis of this paper is not so far back in history that my research needed to be strictly conducted in a library. The generation that experienced firsthand, the effects of television and the shows that were produced in 1960s and 1970s America, are alive and well, and have been one of the most valuable resources I have worked with.

I wanted to gain the perspective of people who lived in a time when television was new and exciting. I felt they were the group who would provide me with a new outlook on television and how sitcoms of the 1960s and 1970s impacted the people it entertained. I was hoping they could shed light on a time where TV meant something to people, or at the very least provide reflections upon something that they might not have known was taking place at the time, but could see much clearer now.

The first place I looked for these primary sources was my workplace. I currently work in an office in which 75% of my co-workers are preparing for retirement, the perfect age group. Not only were they living in 1963, they remember it well. However, what made them an even more appealing group, was that they are all women. Once I had decided I really wanted to move away from the radio and hone in on the television, I began polling my office. "What television shows did you watch the most growing up? Why? What did they mean to you?". As soon as I asked, our work day was over. Being that it was only 10:30 am, the rest of the day was filled with five fifty and sixty somethings reminiscing about a "simpler" time and all the fun they

had growing up. They mentioned a few shows that I had heard of, *I Love Lucy*, *The Brady Bunch*, *The Mod Squad*, and *The Ed Sullivan Show*, just to name a few. Mixed in was talk of maxi dresses, flat ironing their hair with an actual iron, and military jackets. They all had their own opinions on television shows, music, fashion, and even cars. However, one thing they all agreed on was how much they loved the television show “Bewitched”. They all loved Samantha, her hair, her clothing, her humor, and her demeanor. So with the close of business that day and a solid recommendation from my co-workers, I began to do a little digging on Samantha Stephens. From the first episode I watched of “Bewitched,” I realized I had found exactly what I was looking for.

Role of Women in American Society Prior to 1963

The role of women in American society has changed drastically since 1964. The slew of changes that have taken affect due to a series of Supreme Court cases and political enactments promoting the rights of women, have ignited the role of women in society that had been stagnant since nearly the beginning of time. Living in a world where these changes seem to be the norm, a world where my parents told me as a little girl, I could be anything I wanted to be, it is hard to imagine what life was like for women prior to 1963.

In 1963, as a result of President John F. Kennedy’s Executive Order 10980, the Presidential Commission on The Status of Women was established to educate the president on the status of women in the United States. The fact that a report was commissioned at all, speaks volumes to the status of women prior to 1963.

“At the turn of the century, the popular assumption about the dowry of skills a young woman would bring into marriage anticipated that the young farm wife knew how to cook and bake, keeping the wood or coal stove stoked to the proper temperature; how to can and preserve the annual yield of orchard fruits and garden vegetables to supply a family requirement calculated at 125 quarts per person. She would use a sewing machine to make her long-sleeved blouses, her

floor-sweeping dresses, her children's pinafores and her husband's shirts and nightshirts- his Sunday suit might be bought through the catalog of a mail-order house. She expected to nurse the family ailments prevalent at the time- children's diseases, pneumonia, typhoid fever, malaria, tuberculosis. In case there was no school in the back country, she would teach her youngsters herself."⁶¹

The picture painted of the expectations of women had not changed for over a hundred years, and would not change for the sixty three years that would follow. The Status of Women report discussed not only the current status of women, but also, the changes the government hoped to see in the future. While that may seem encouraging, the findings in the report up until 1963 demonstrate how low the expectations were for women educationally and professionally, and truly exposed what the expectation for a women's role really was. Women were expected to continue on in "women's ancient function of providing love and nurture."⁶² This expectation kept women's roles limited to the home to care for their families, undereducated and unemployed.

Women's primary function was to remain in the home and tend to household duties such as keeping a neat and organized home and caring for the children. A women's role prior to 1963 was "the making of a home, the rearing of children, and the transmission to them in their earliest years of the values of the American heritage."⁶³ In fact, women and mothers were often the only adult family members assuming the day to day responsibilities of the home.⁶⁴

Because women were the sole caretakers of their homes and children, both were seen as a reflection of themselves. Children's behavior inside and outside of the home were directly

⁶¹ United States. 1963. *American Women. Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, 1963*, 60.

⁶² United States. *Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, 1963.*, 4.

⁶³ United States. *Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, 1963.*, 4.

⁶⁴ United States. *Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, 1963.*, 9.

linked by society to their mothers and the role they played in their lives.⁶⁵ Women were expected to raise their children properly, if a child was behaving poorly in school, “the child’s problem was not the fault of the teacher: It was the fault of the mother.”⁶⁶ In the years in which women did increase their presence in the public sphere, anxiety over juvenile delinquency increased. If a woman was going to increase her presence outside of the home, it was thought to be at the expense of her family. “The person largely responsible for maintaining the family, raising the children, and in the context of the Cold War, protecting the domestic home front, was the wife and mother.”⁶⁷ It was the societal pressures such as these which kept women in the home and therefore kept their role and status in society, status quo. Working mothers were a threat to society, except for when it was convenient for the nation. Throughout WWII women were encouraged to enter the workforce as part of their role in supporting the war effort.

If it was not the guilt or the social pressures that were keeping women in the home prior to 1963, it was the lack of education and job opportunities available to them. In 1963, Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz stated “There is not going to be much in the way of expanding opportunities for women unless we are ready and able to assure the jobs in which the economy as a whole requires.”⁶⁸ In 1963, the consensus was that unless the economy began to increase at a rapid rate, there would be no jobs for women, the ones that were available would be for men. There were opportunities for women, however, they would not be considered to be “expanding”. Women’s participation in employment outside of the home was generally limited to teaching, nursing, social work, clerical duties, and stewardess. In 1960 the largest

⁶⁵ Kafka, Judith. "Disciplining Youth, Disciplining Women: Motherhood, Delinquency, and Race in Postwar American Schooling." *Educational Studies*: 197-221.

⁶⁶ Kafka, Judith. "Disciplining Youth, Disciplining Women: Motherhood, Delinquency, and Race in Postwar American Schooling.", 198.

⁶⁷ Kafka, Judith. "Disciplining Youth, Disciplining Women: Motherhood, Delinquency, and Race in Postwar American Schooling.", 201.

⁶⁸ United States. *Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, 1963.*, 2.

populations of working women, seven million, were participating in clerical opportunities.⁶⁹ The other opportunities that were presented to women, teaching, nursing, stewardess', were based on skills that women were expected to have in the home; teaching, nurturing, healing, and hostessing. "In the early years, stewardesses were required to be trained nurses and wore what amounted to a nurse's uniform. They served passengers food, drink, and chewing gum (to relieve the sudden changes in cabin pressure), earplugs (to block out the deafening noises of the engines), ammonia capsules (in case they fainted), and in the worst cases, they administered First Aid."⁷⁰ Women made flying a more pleasant experience, therefore, they were not only welcomed, but encouraged to join that capacity of the workforce. "A Stewardess...brought women's 'homemaking instincts' to flight."⁷¹ Where other private and public employers were discriminating against women because of their sex, airlines were hiring women because of their sex. Women had job opportunities in these industries because of the tasks they did at home; even their work was an extension of their role in the home. Women working for Delta Airlines were given the following instructions in their training curricula, "Now girls... I want you to think of the cabin as the living room in your very own home. At home, wouldn't you go out of your way to make friends at ease and have a good time?"⁷² At home and work alike, women were expected to be placing the needs of others above their own.

While job opportunities for women prior to 1963 were deficient, the ones that existed placed women in the same role as they had in the home. Education, or lack thereof, also played a part in women's role in society. In 1960, four million women in the United States had less

⁶⁹ United States. *Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, 1963.*, 28

⁷⁰ Lyth, Peter. "'Think of her as your mother': Airline advertising and the stewardess in America, 1930-1980." *The Journal of Transport History*: 5.

⁷¹ Lyth, Peter. "'Think of her as your mother': Airline advertising and the stewardess in America, 1930-1980.", 5.

⁷² Lyth, Peter. "'Think of her as your mother': Airline advertising and the stewardess in America, 1930-1980.", 6.

than five years of formal education.⁷³ While society was growing and modernizing around them, some women could not even follow simple written instructions. Women remained undereducated because they were expected to fulfill their womanly duties at home. “Because too little is expected of them, many girls who graduate from high school intellectually able to do good college work, do not go to college.”⁷⁴ Prior to 1963, women who had proved they could perform academically, did not, because of the expectations set in society regarding the role of women.

Even when education was available and promoted to women, “home-making” was still considered to be an important part of the program. The Status of Women report, indicated many areas of improvement for women in American society, placing an emphasis on education. Nevertheless, the report was careful not to leave out the need for women to be educated in domestic duties, as well as academics. “Even women’s colleges have given remarkably little serious thought to the better preparation of their students for the homemaking most of them will do.”⁷⁵ The report encouraged education for women, at the same time, acknowledged that a women’s place was really in the home.

A women’s role in society prior to 1963 was most often confined to the home. As 1963 approached, Americans were marrying younger, and having more children than their parents,⁷⁶ forcing someone to stay in the home, that someone was women. Women who looked to leave the home were considered selfish and seen as abandoning their families. Those who were able

⁷³ United States. *Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, 1963.*, 10.

⁷⁴ United States. *Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, 1963.*, 4.

⁷⁵ United States. *Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, 1963.*, 17.

⁷⁶ United States. *Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, 1963.*, iii.

to get past the shame, worked in jobs that were essentially extensions of their role in the home, playing on their responsibilities to care for and teach others.

“Bewitched”

In 1964 “Bewitched” aired on American television. The sitcom takes place in a typical suburban American household somewhere around New York City. A handsome man, Darrin Stephens, is married to a beautiful woman, Samantha Stephens, and their home life and relationship is depicted on screen. “Bewitched” is unique for 1960s American television, because Samantha is not actually your typical 1960s housewife, she is in fact a witch. Throughout the series, Samantha cannot help but use her supernatural powers to help solve the problems of her “typical” American household.

“Bewitched” demonstrates the initial breakdown of traditional male and female roles in the home, as well as, outside of the home. The show is a struggle between the traditional and “not so traditional” dynamic that began to show in American culture at the start of the 1960s. Women began to creep out of the kitchen and into a more outspoken, independent, less traditional role than what they more recently had in 1950s America. Samantha, along with her mother, Endora, consistently, yet not so bluntly break the chains of women in the home. While Darrin continues on with his bread-winning, decision making, and dominating male role, he is oblivious to the fact that it is indeed Samantha, with the help of Endora, who are the stars of the show; both literally and figuratively. This may be due to the fact that “Bewitched” is centered on such abnormal circumstances; however, I have never seen a television show that focuses so clearly on “normalcy”.

In the opening scenes of the series, the narrator explains in brief how the two main characters came to meet and be married. Before the audience is ever told the characters names, the narrator mentions the word “typical” five times. The show paints the picture of a storybook meeting of mates in which “everyone aspires to having”. The narrator begins by saying “Once upon a time... a typical girl...a typical boy... a typical courtship... a typical wedding...a typical honeymoon.” The focus on the customary steps of their relationship is a representation of the customary lives of Americans living in 1964.

The first season of “Bewitched” aired at the start of rapid changes that were about to begin in America society regarding gender roles. At this time, legally, women are deemed inferior to men in many aspects of life. Women were treated as though they must be coddled; they needed love and affection to obtain self-worth. Women were expected to be subservient to their husbands; their place was in the home and they were expected to keep that home running smoothly. The expectation was that the children were fed and bathed, the house was clean, and dinner was on the table for their men who had worked hard all day. The women of 1964 were, for the most part, still living out the lives of their June Cleaver predecessors, yet the changes to women’s rights that would very soon follow 1964, with the passage of multiple laws and Supreme Court rulings, would begin to show up in homes across the nation.

Season One of “Bewitched” demonstrates the gradual shift in gender roles that began to occur in society in 1964. While Samantha does hold some power in her household, it is often downplayed by her. Instead of flexing her feminine muscles, she moderates them to assure Darrin that he is in charge. Samantha comforts him by reiterating that she will carry out her life doing things the way they “should be done”, the mortal way, and that Darrin’s needs will

always be met and they will live happily ever after. Samantha's self-worth in Season One is very much surrounded by her ability to please Darrin, just as women in reality were expected to do. The opening credits of "Bewitched" consist of cartoon characters of Darrin and Samantha. Both are in the kitchen, Darrin is in a suit and Samantha is in a typical 1950-60s housewife dress with an apron on, and Darrin is holding Samantha in his arm. The opening credits of "Bewitched" are a portrayal of how life in the early 1960s was "supposed" to be.

In Episode One, Season One of "Bewitched", Samantha stresses the importance of being "normal" and a good wife to Darrin. This was the role that was thought to be for women in the early 1960s. In the very beginning of the first episode, Samantha lets Darrin know that she is a witch. He does not believe her, and rightfully so. Samantha then plays a few harmless tricks on him to demonstrate her powers. When Darrin falls back into the couch in utter shock, Samantha, like any good 1964 housewife would, goes to nurture and care for him. She calms him down by stroking his head and saying "I will make you a good wife, I promise". Being a "good" wife and demonstrating her ability to do so is Samantha's number one concern in the scene. After Darrin has taken some time, he lets Samantha know that he loves her and he does not want to lose her, Samantha responds with "I will be the best wife a man ever had!".

After Samantha has established that she will be a wonderful wife, putting all of her aspirations into fulfilling this task for Darrin, Darrin then sets ground rules for their future together. First, he states, they are going to have a normal life. Second, Samantha must learn to be a suburban housewife. Third, Samantha must learn to cook and keep house. And fourth, they must go to his mother's house for dinner every Friday night. Darrin's ground rules are an example of a typical male-dominated marriage in the early 1960s. Darrin's emphasis on

Samantha's ability to be a normal suburban housewife, cooking and cleaning, further represents the gender roles set and carried out in early 1960s American society. Samantha's response to the rules set by Darrin is, "That sounds wonderful! And we will be a normal happy couple with no problems, just like everybody else".

In Season One, Episode Two, the narrator begins the opening scene by saying "Here you see the average American housewife in her normal tasks." Samantha is in the kitchen preparing breakfast for Darrin. The narrator continues on by saying "with all of the modern conveniences at her disposal, sometimes there are problems, especially if your husband expects breakfast to be ready when he comes down in the morning, but that is no problem for the average suburban housewife." The narrator makes it sound so simple as if "those are the expectations, and any normal wife would be able to complete them". The comedy of it all is that Samantha struggles severely with completing these "simple" tasks. "Bewitched" is actually mocking the unrealistic expectations that have been set for women in the 1950s and early 1960s. The transformation of women's role in society was beginning to take shape, and the sitcom uses comedy to reflect those changes that were taking place in reality. The typical housewife portrayal continues to exist in the show, because it very much existed in reality, yet the push back from women in society also appeared on the sitcom. The high expectations of women are blatantly mocked when Samantha cannot perform any of the "typical" suburban housewife duties without the use of her magic powers.

"Bewitched" mimics the struggle between traditional and non-traditional gender roles at the start of its Season Two. Both traditional cultural culture, as well as, a more forward

thinking culture, that men may no longer be the dominate role in the home, are very prominent throughout the episodes.

Traditional

In a traditional manner, we see a pretty women married to a handsome man in an upscale suburban neighborhood. Darrin is a professional who works at an ad agency, while Samantha is a housewife who tends to the needs of the home. At the start of Season Two, it is even revealed that she is with child. In Episode One of Season Two, Samantha is making Darrin breakfast. She nurtures him and encourages him to eat more for breakfast than black coffee, as he will need his strength for his day at the office. She assumes the role of mother to him, ensuring that he is fed and dressed for work. Darrin reads the paper and mentally preps for his hard day at the office. When things take a supernatural turn when Samantha's aunt appears and turns Darrin into a monkey, the gender roles have been clearly established in the relationship and in the home. Darrin is considered incapable, and Samantha must take the reins. The dynamic continues throughout the episode, as Samantha knows that Darrin cannot go to work in his condition, she calls on Endora to "take care" of Darrin while she steps out of the house for a while. Even as a monkey Darrin establishes his dominance when Endora humorously asks for him to stop shedding his monkey hair, he replies with "It is my house and I can shed hair wherever I want".

It is not only in the Stephens home that we see traditional gender roles exploited. When the Stephens' nose women neighbor, Gladys Kravtiz hears that Darrin is "under the weather", implying that she has nothing better to do than police the neighborhood, she bakes a tray of

cookies to send over to Samantha and Darrin. The insight that viewers receive in the Kravitz home, is that it has not yet been exposed to the less traditional gender roles that can be seen in the Stephens' home. In Episode One of Season Two, we see Gladys spewing neighborhood gossip and her compulsion to snoop around the Stephens' home, after she drops the cookies off of course. All the while, Gladys' husband lays on the couch rolls his eyes at Gladys commentary and smokes his pipe. The inclusion of both households in the show depicts the subtleties of what was the "Womens Liberation Movement" in 1964. It existed, as it is depicted in the Stephens' home, however, it was not accepted or embraced by all, the viewer can see in the Kravtiz's home.

Later in Season Two, the show focuses primarily on Samantha's pregnancy entirely. We continue to see the traditional gender roles expressed. At the start of Episode Two, Darrin says he is going to "spoil [Samantha] rotten". She replies that she does not want him cooking and cleaning up after her. Darrin continues to express his "men know best" mentality when he is explaining the benefits of Samantha's breakfast to her. "Orange juice for vitamin C, hot cereal for protein, and milk for strong bones." Darrin is essentially teaching Samantha what is best for her and the baby.

When Darrin gets to work in the same episode, male chauvinism beams throughout the office. Darrin has a beautiful secretary who answers the phone so cheerfully, the person on the other end can see the smile on her face through the phone. Furthermore, a conversation takes place between Darrin and his boss, Larry Tate, that might as well be illegal in 2014, making it extremely clear how far the movement has come. Mr. Tate insists that Darrin not cater to Samantha so much, regardless of her pregnancy. He notices that Darrin looks tired and informs

him that “your wife’s pregnancy is only rough if you make it rough”. Tate reiterates that Darrin is in charge in the home and women will take advantage of men if men let them. Implying that men must keep the leash on women tight enough that they not attempt to run away. He states “In pioneer days, women would plow the field, have their babies, and return to work after lunch”. Mr. Tate is reinforcing much of the traditional mindset of men in the 1960s workplace. Darrin agrees with Mr. Tate and brings his male chauvinism from the workplace, back into the home. When Darrin returns home, he is now refusing to help pregnant Samantha around the house, and puts both Samantha and a protesting Endora “in their place”. Darrin scolds Endora and states “she is my wife, and I know what is best for her”. Darrin is flexing his muscles for what seems to be the fleeting power that has transferred to the women in his life. This very statement can be used as a metaphor for the reality that was 1960s America. It is these specific scenes, Darrin and Larry in the workplace, and Darrin flexing his muscles at home, that mirror that pushback that women received in society when they look to breakout of their traditional gender roles in society. As light as a situation comedy is, the disdain for women and their ambitions show through quite clearly. Good jokes mock reality and a situation comedy is just that, a comedy. While humor was added, the type of male chauvinism and the clear expression of gender roles that existed in the fiction of “Bewitched”, mirror the reality that was 1960s America.

Non-Traditional

While traditional American culture could be seen through television shows like “Bewitched”, a more non-traditional view of what America would eventually be also crept on to

the silver screen. In 1964 for the majority of the show, Samantha is presented as a calm, capable, and collected woman. While, Darrin stepped in to “teach” Samantha the ways of the mortal world, she never truly needed his intervention. When Samantha’s aunt turns Darrin into a monkey at the start of Season Two, the show seems to be mocking the traditional dynamic that has been accepted in American society. While Samantha is the rational, competent, adept female, Darrin is paraded as the incapable, inept, foolish male. Because Samantha’s aunt was the one to transform Darrin, it is up to either her aunt, herself, or her mother to covert him back into a man. Essentially, the women in the show hold all of the cards. Darrin’s life, quite literally depended on them.

Undertones of non-traditional female dominance show up all throughout the episodes. In traditional 1950s and 1960s American television, we see men make comments to women regarding their appearance or quirky personalities, and women giggle and being embarrassed by the attention that they are receiving. In Episode One of Season Two, Samantha makes comments about how cute Darrin looks in his baby clothes, the only clothes small enough to fit a monkey of course, and Darrin walks away hurt and embarrassed. The emotions that Darrin displays in the episode are those of what would be considered to be stereotypical female behaviors, emphasizing the role reversal that “Bewitched” had displayed to its audience.

On top of it all, Endora, Samantha’s mother, shows Darrin absolutely no respect. She does not respect that it is his home, he is married to her daughter, and most of all, that he is a man. Gender has, without question, holds no bearing on Endora’s actions towards Darrin. She often goes over his head after specific instructions, ignores his opinions, and never once calls him by the correct name. In Episode Two of Season Two, Endora openly bashes Darrin right in

front of him. She expresses her displeasure with Samantha's pregnancy solely based on Darrin's participation in the matter. "Having a baby will tie you to him forever. He is turning you into a typical housewife drudge." Endora does not feel that Samantha is getting the respect she deserves while she is pregnant, or not pregnant for that matter. Her response was to place a spell on Darrin providing him with the typical pregnancy symptoms of a woman. As in Episode One, Darrin has now transformed from a traditional dominate, working man, into a whining, blubbery, inferior character on the show. A character that was once capable is now reliant on the women in his life to nurture him. To top it all off, and to really hit the ball home, Samantha is showing no signs of pregnancy whatsoever. This is a symbol of the strong women that really began to shine through in the media. While Darrin was crying about the lack of accolades received for his contributions at work, Samantha was going about her day as she would even if she had not been pregnant.

At the end of Episode Two Season Two, Darrin is daydreaming that he is actually giving birth to a baby. Meanwhile, Samantha is in the waiting room handing out cigars to the men in the room. "Bewitched" demonstrates very clearly in 1964 that men could act like women and women could act like men. This represents a very visible turning point in American culture. In 1964 women began creeping out of the kitchens and heading into a more public sphere. While Samantha did not head to work in Season Two of "Bewitched", she pushed back on the idea of a male dominated and driven society, whether she knew of her actions or not. In 1964 it was not so clear that women's roles would change so drastically in the near future, however, "Bewitched" absolutely hinted at it. The fact that the lines were not so clearly drawn on gender roles shows that the sitcom was very much mirroring what was taking place in American reality.

There was often a struggle on the show of traditional and non-traditional gender roles in society, however, more often than not, order was in the hands of Samantha. This is a concept that would very soon overtake the traditional idea in American culture that men ruled the roost.

Real Life Samantha Stephens

In 1963 the Equal Pay Act had become a United States law. One of the provisions of the act intended to “prohibit discrimination on account of sex in the payment of wages by employers engaged in commerce or the production of goods for commerce”.⁷⁷ The act had been proposed by Edith Green, the second women elected to the United States House of Representatives, eight years earlier. However, large credit is given to Martha Wright Griffiths for the inclusion of sex into the ground breaking proposal that would eventually be written into law. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 would set precedence in the United States that would allow women to inch closer to gender equality. The precedent that was set would be mirrored in the media, specifically television, in sitcoms like “Bewitched”. In reality, the gap of gender inequality in the workplace was slowly closing. The Equal Pay Act showed that more and more women were leaving the home and heading to the workplace, enough that new additions to United States law were necessary. Women were proving that they could do the work of men, and in turn, men could do the work of women. This is a reflection that was clearly visualized on “Bewitched”. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 was a step toward breaking the barriers of gender roles

⁷⁷ "Equal Employment Opportunity Commission - EEOC Home Page."

and equality; however, it was by no means a cure for the discrimination against women that had been embedded in American culture for generations.

In the journal article, "Putting the Feminine Mystique in Context", author Anita Taylor reflects on her life in 1963, also the year the now historical document, "The Feminine Mystique" by Betty Friedan was published. Taylor's accounts of a thriving, credible, and accomplished career are tarnished with the recollections of persistent gender restrictions in the workplace. Taylor possessed a masters degree and was appointed the Director of Forensics at Kansas State University.⁷⁸ Both credits are very prestigious honors that many cannot/have not obtained in 2014, let alone a woman in 1963. Taylor explains that due to access to the birth control pill and a very supportive husband, she chose the path in which she would not have children, but instead peruse her career.⁷⁹ Although today, it does not seem necessary to choose one or the other, in 1963, the choice itself was a very new concept in the United States. Taylor was on the cutting edge of an era. She has a prestigious career and due to advances in the modern medicine, she had chosen to leave the previously set stereotypes and gender roles behind for good. Where one would think that tradition had been broken and women now had the freedom to choose a life path, traditional and non-traditional gender roles continued to clash throughout the mid- 1960's reality.

While Taylor lived what seemed to be a charmed non-traditional life for a women in the early 1960's, she was plagued with the push back of traditional gender roles that were so alive and well in 1963. Taylor admits that while she was not out protesting for an equal wage, she did

⁷⁸ Taylor, Anita. "Putting the Feminine Mystique in Context." *Women and Language* 36: 73.

⁷⁹ Taylor, Anita. "Putting the Feminine Mystique in Context.", 73.

indeed engage in salary disputes and other career limitation issues that were being placed on her at Kansas State.⁸⁰ Furthermore, it was not simply an issue she encountered with Kansas State University.

“Men ran the professional Associations and expected to do so; women were welcome to come, adore--- even decorate the arms of --- the great professors. We could do the ‘clerical’ and ‘housekeeping’ work that organizations require; but only the occasional superstar female would receive the recognition beyond such roles... Few women presented paper at conventions; fewer published in the journals; only the occasional token graced offices in our national association. In our field we could also see that rhetorical critics and historians rarely found women’s rhetoric worth attention; and if sex of objects was concerned at all in other areas of communication research, it was always in comparison to male subjects” (Taylor, p. 74)

The struggle of traditional and non-traditional gender roles on television was merely a reflection of the outside world. While it was not as black and white as women in a professional career and the limitations being placed on her in the workplace, on “Bewitched”, we see traditional gender roles pushing, and non-traditional roles pushing right back.

Ladies of Society

As traditional as Samantha tried to be, she is very non-traditional by nature. Nearly all of the women portrayed in “Bewitched”, aside from Samantha’s family, are portrayed as “classic” traditional women, who look down upon Samantha’s lack of ability to maintain traditional consistently. The women in the show, show no interest in women’s progression in society, and seem very happy with their existing roles in the show and in society. As with any moves for change in society, there are those who work hard for change, and those who work hard to resist that change. Resistance may occur due to complacency, happiness, or simply the lack of desire to disrupt the “natural” order of things.

⁸⁰ Taylor, Anita. "Putting the Feminine Mystique in Context.", 73.

While much of the resistance against the evolving roles of women in society came from men, there were a large number of women who resisted the change as well. Many women valued the meaning of being a “lady”, and believed that women should continue in their role of acting as “ladies”, any transition away from their traditional roles, would be something less. The ladies on “Bewitched” showed their distaste for Samantha’s non-traditional personality and tactics when pertaining to women’s role in society. It is very evident that in a lot of cases that pertained to traditional female roles, hostessing, mothering, etc., they felt Samantha simply could not hack it, and they made sure they let her know. Samantha’s neighbor Mrs. Gladys Kravitz is the ring leader of the anti-Samantha personality, however, it did not stop with her. The community surrounding Samantha represents the stereotypical 1950s early 1960s suburban housewives who resisted the change in their role in society. They are often shocked and appalled by the changes that began to take place around them.

Gladys Kravitz is the nosey neighbor who lives across the street from the Stephens’. She is everything that Samantha is not. Samantha is young, beautiful, excited, and often not shy about her sexuality with Darrin. Samantha and Darrin are often shown partaking in flirty banter and sharing the same bed. Gladys Kravitz is older, not very attractive, and dull to husband and herself, seeing as she is always spying on her neighbors. Abner, Gladys’ husband, and Gladys are always yelling at one another, they never show affection towards one another, and they sleep in separate beds. Samantha represents the transformation of women’s roles in society in the mid-1960s, whereas Gladys represents the traditional American housewife, who evolved so little in such a large amount of time. Gladys is constantly looking out the window to supervise the situation at the Stephens’ home. She is the only person on the show who sees Samantha for

who she really is, but of course, no one believes her. Gladys' distrust for Samantha shows her opposition to the change in women's roles. Gladys sees something in Samantha, something non-traditional and views it as suspect, knowing it is not "right".

Gladys is consistently concerned with others before herself. While this may be a negative trait when it comes to her intrusions on the Stephens', in regards to the children in her life she takes on the role of protector and nurturer just as any "lady" in the 1950s and early 1960s would. Gladys did not have any children of her own, however, she is always at her nephew's baseball games supporting and encouraging him, and in later seasons takes him in while her brother is unable to care for him. Gladys puts everyone before herself, good, bad, and ugly, her concern is first and foremost that of others. Women's role at this time centered on caring for others, and while Gladys is often obnoxious and over the top, this measure of pride is very obvious. Additionally, in Season One, Episode Fifteen, the Kravitzs visit an orphanage to take a child into their home for Christmas. When getting out of the car, Gladys asks Abner to keep an open mind about adoption. He of course shuts her down, but her expression of wanting a child is something that assisted many women of this time in establishing their own self-worth.

Gladys is not the only one who opposes the changes in women's roles. While Gladys' opposition is perhaps more subtle because no one believes her suspicions, the rest of the neighborhood women are not so tactful. Samantha has a way of saving herself, the viewers know that it is due to her magic; however, in situations regarding the roles of women, when things begin to go south for her, the other women on the show have no problem letting her know that the state of affairs is unacceptable. In Season One, Episode Four, Gladys and the rest

of the neighbor ladies stop by to see Samantha and to welcome her to the neighborhood. While in the Stephens' home, they make back handed comments with the intentions of letting Samantha know that she is inadequate. One of the ladies first comments on what a lovely home Samantha has, and then tells her she will give her the name of her decorator. The thought process behind this was, that in order to be a good women, you had to be a good housewife, and to be a good housewife, you must be a good hostess. It simply would not be acceptable for you to be keeping your home in a state that was anything less than enjoyable for your guests. In addition, the ladies in the neighborhood are constantly volunteering one another to work on civil service type committees. They make it known that it is their duty to serve the community, and therefore they do not have a choice, because that is what "ladies" do. In one of Samantha's first encounters with the neighbors, they sign Samantha up for a construction protest the following week. "Of course we do not want a freeway coming through this area." By not providing Samantha with the option to participate, they demonstrate that they are completely content with their roles in society, *of course WE do not*, indicates that WE all feel this way, and you should too. That very statement is a protest against change for women. Not only do they want Samantha to attend, they want her to bring refreshments for the construction crews, as they do not want to be seen as bad guests/hostess', a cornerstone of the roles of women in 1963.

Another one of the neighbors protesting the change in women's roles in society is the mother of the neighbor boy, Marshall, who takes a liking to Samantha. Marshall's mother takes mothering to a whole new level and takes extreme pride in how her son is portrayed and how her mothering skills are portrayed outside of the home. This characteristic is another

cornerstone to the role of women in the 1950s and 1960s. In Season One, Episode Six, Marshall shows up at the Stephens' door and is invited in by Samantha. Shortly after, Marshall's mother frantically comes to the door looking for Marshall. When Samantha lets her know he is safe in her home, Marshall's mother lays into her. She lets Samantha know that Marshall should be at home in his room because he has a cold and she would hope that another adult like Samantha would recognize that. Marshall's mother is furious with what she perceives to be as, Samantha's lack of concern for a child, and indicates that she is less than a proper lady because she does not know how to care for children. Children and mothering were a large part of women's role in society and Samantha's lack of instinct makes it "quite obvious", to Marshall's mother that Samantha has no children. Marshall's mother's stern tone and condescending words are a protest against the change in women's roles. She feels like Samantha should know that children are not just fun and games, and is appalled by Samantha's lackadaisical approach towards Marshall. Marshall's mother states, "I have raised Marshall very carefully, and I do not appreciate interference from anybody." Marshall's mother's pride and self-worth lies in her ability to raise Marshall suitably and present him to the world as such.

Another example of the women protesting against change in women's roles comes in Season One Episode Sixteen. Samantha is hosting a fundraising committee meeting in her home. At the same time, Endora has placed a spell on Darrin and his friends making them extremely carefree and relaxed. The committee women are appalled at Samantha's hostessing skills due to the tremendously loud and rowdy group of men playing poker on the back patio. They are shocked that she allows these "antics" in her home. They continuously make comments such as, "maybe we should leave and have our meeting at another time or place",

and finally the leader of the committee states “I think it is time we left. Maybe we should reconsider the committee.” Their statements against Samantha and their protests against changing women’s role are clear. If Samantha cannot control her own home, then she is not a “lady”, therefore, she should not be allowed to partake in “lady-like” affairs, and furthermore, they should no longer be associating with her.

“Bewitched” is a reflection of the changing roles of women in American society in the 1960s. However, as change was taking place for women, resistance to that change was occurring from women as well. Many women of the generation felt comfortable in their roles and took pride in their ability to be a “lady”. They valued the roles of hostess, housewife, and mother and looked down upon those who did not take their roles as seriously. While this paper has been geared toward the *changes* in the role of women in society that were seen on television, it would be unfair to exclude the reflection of the *resistance* that can also be seen on television quite clearly.

The Evolution of “Bewitched”

“Bewitched” is a classic television situation comedy series that ran from 1964 until 1972. In the eight years the series aired, audiences were exposed to the changing roles of women in society right on their television screens. Throughout the 1960s the role of women had evolved. The early 1960s had women continuing on the legacy of their 1950s foremothers. Their primary role was in the home, tending to the housework, preparing meals, and caring for the children and men in their lives. They were renowned hostesses and caretakers, who often put others

needs before their own. While their actions were selfless and habitually genuine, they were also expected due to their sex.

As the decade continued the expectation of women evolved. Opportunities for women outside of the home become more prevalent and the women's sphere began to expand. Wage and employment discrimination became illegal, opening the doors for women in the workplace. And while women did not flock to the office, the mere idea that women could potentially stand on their own financially was significant in the evolution of women's role in American society. Additionally, the availability of birth control to women in the United States aided in the change of the role of women. Women's ability and access to family planning methods allowed for a choice in motherhood and a thus a choice in the role they would play in society. Once women were no longer bound to their home by their children and opportunities were presented for reasons to leave the home, the foundation of the role of women began to change.

The change in the role and the expectations of women in the 1960s did not occur overnight. As many women felt liberated, many women resisted the changes that were occurring. The evolution of women from submissive housewife to "equal" human beings can be seen in the evolution of the television series "Bewitched". As society was evolving, so was the series. At the start of the series Samantha is portrayed as the "perfect" housewife, or as perfect as a witch as a housewife could be. She plays the role to the best of her ability and feels pressure from Darrin and the other characters in the show to perform her role. As much as she tried not to use her powers, at the request of Darrin, the pressure of the expectations of women so often get to her and she feels forced to use her powers to keep up the charade. There is a scene at the start of the series where Samantha has been working in her garden all

morning with little success. While she is staring at her lack of accomplishment, she hears Darrin's footsteps and immediately uses her powers to transform her garden to the likings of Darrin. The many other cases that Samantha feels pressure to use her powers often revolve around housework and food preparation, two domains in which women were expected to perform at a higher level than men. Darrin offers little assistance in what he believes to be as Samantha's domain, he typically orders her to "clean the kitchen and come to bed" without any hesitation or support.

As the series progressed Samantha used her powers less out of need to impress others, and more as a convenience to herself and those around her. In Season Seven, Episode Eight, Samantha and Darrin appear in their living room from a trip they had taken. Darrin had mentioned that he would like to return home right away, and Samantha made that happen. Samantha's powers had evolved into a luxury as the pressure to perform alone was relieved. Darrin was not as opposed to reaping the benefits of something that he had originally protested so strongly against because he was now contributing in a realm that was once solely occupied by Samantha. By Season Six, the viewers begin to see not only Samantha performing housework, but Darrin as well. The requests of Samantha that Darrin had once made became less frequent, the audience never sees Darrin performing housework alone, however, they do see both he and Samantha performing the duties together. Also, the presence of a babysitter for Samantha and Darrin's children appeared. Samantha was not tied to her home by her children; she felt comfortable leaving them with others and even vacationed without them. Samantha is often seen performing motherly duties, however, her ability to have her own life

outside of them, was a reflection of women leaving the home and entering the public sphere much more frequently in reality.

Another aspect of the evolution of the series along with society was Samantha's style. In the beginning of the series Samantha is consistently dressed as a 1950s housewife. Her hair was always pulled back into an up-do, or down in a sleek bob. She wore conservative clothing covering her chest and knees as to not make anyone else around her uncomfortable. It was seen as proper to put your best foot forward in and outside of the home, and in the beginning of the series, Samantha was always put together. She never made herself seem available by dressing as if she was anything less than married. However, as the decade progressed so did Samantha. Women in society, who had embraced the progression of women's roles, had begun to dress less like "ladies" and more like women. Women's clothing in America became shorter, tighter, and louder. By the end of the series, Samantha's knee length, boat cut, conservative dresses were replaced by short skirts, bellbottom, and wild colored outfits. Around Season five the audience is introduced to Samantha's knee caps, and by Season eight, they had full view of almost her entire thigh. Also, the conventional color schemes that she once donned, gray, hunter green, pink, were replaced by wild patterns of lime green and hot pink. Samantha's hair also changed. Her slick and put together up-dos were exchanged with a longer, blonder, more processed hair style. Samantha's hair was more relaxed and had been fussed with less, as sign of the changing times. No longer were women expected to be the grandiose hostesses they once were, they were liberated and they showed it.

Another aspect of the evolution of women lies in the opening credits of the show. The same stereotypical scene is depicted throughout the series, Samantha in the kitchen in Darrin's

arms, however, at the start of Season Six, “Elizabeth Montgomery”, the actress playing Samantha, are the first words spoken in the credits. She is only name introduced and she is introduced as the star. Prior to Season Six, no words were spoken, Elizabeth Montgomery is the first credited actress, however, once the narrator says “Elizabeth Montgomery in “Bewitched”, the show has truly become hers. This may seem trivial, however, as women were evolving in society and gaining more respect as separate entities from their husbands and families, “Bewitched” was depicting it on screen. Elizabeth Montgomery was the star of the show and she was no longer muddled in with her co-stars.

“Bewitched” mirrored American culture and society in the pivotal years of the mid-twentieth century. More specifically, “Bewitched” mirrored society when pertaining to the change in the role of women between the years of 1964 and 1972. The television series provided audiences with a front row seat to a gender that was evolving around them. Season One of “Bewitched” finished second in the Neilson Ratings of 1964 and continued to decline as the series progressed. The entertainment value may have not been there for the viewers, however, the show serves as an archive of the evolution of women’s roles in American society. The series began ahead of its time and illustrated what would shortly follow, a 1960s American housewife subconsciously pushing back on tradition that left women without a true identity of their own. The series ended not as progressive as it had started but depicted a true reflection of what was taking place in society, women and men working together in a home for a greater good other than their own. Perhaps this was the reason for the decline in the ratings of the show, it flat lined. Regardless of viewer ratings, “Bewitched” reflected the ever changing role of women in American society at the start of one of the most rapidly moving civil rights periods in

American history. Because of “Bewitched” American women will be able to view this essential time period in the move for their equality for years to come.

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