THE AMERICAN WORKING WOMAN: A CENTURY IN REVIEW

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The past century has witnessed many changes in our society and in the workplace specifically. This essay reviews the last 120 years of American women in the workplace and discusses their journey as their roles in American society continue to change. It will then identify ways women can thrive in the workplace and in their leadership potential today, as well as how this is expressed specifically in the lives of Christian women. Thriving at work is not to be achieved at the expense of not thriving at home. Thriving should include the whole person and include all areas of a woman's life.

I. INTRODUCTION

With all the talk about culture and women in the workplace, one would think that great strides are taking place for women and that more women are building careers in numerous industries. Therefore, it is surprising to see that the labor force participation rate of women in the workforce has only slightly increased in the last three to five years after a 20-year decrease, according to Albanesi and Sahin (2018) and a recent Gallup research study (Miller & Adkins, 2017). In an analysis of the previous six decades (1940 - 1999), the United States experienced a continuous increase in the female labor force participation rate—the number of women available for work as a percentage of the total female working-age population. In 1999, this rate reached an all-time high of 60%. Then, from 1999 to approximately 2015, the female participation rate trended downward until 2016, where it once again began another gradual lift (see Figure 1). Meanwhile, the

total number of women of working age—the total female labor force—had grown steadily the entire time from 66.3 million women in 2000, making up 46.5% of the total labor force, to 73.5 million in 2015, representing 46.8% of the total labor force. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that in 2024, the female representation will grow to 77.2 million, increasing female representation to 47.2% of the total labor force population (Toossi & Morisi, 2017). Havens (2013) posits that "Corporate America is interested in recruiting and retaining female talent due to its strong positive impact on the financial bottom line" even though women continue to face "harsh structural economic and workplace obstacles" (p. 7).

Figure 1

Men's and Women's Labor Force Participation Rates in the United States

Notes: Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Shading indicates NBER recessions.
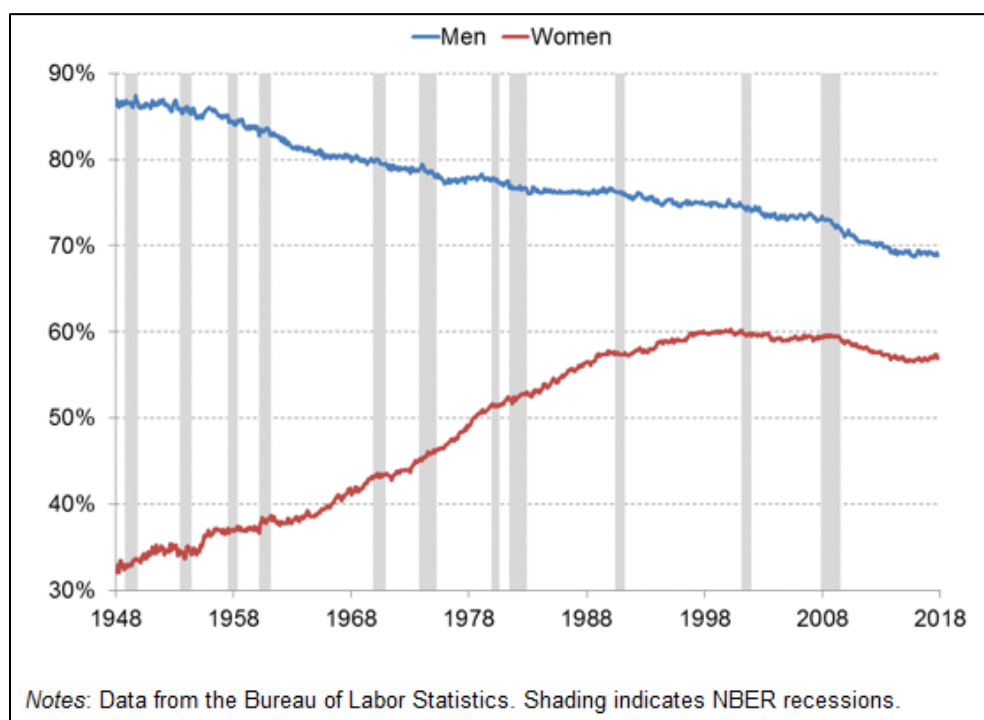
What factors are fueling these trends, and what in the past century has contributed to our current workplace environments, specifically for women? This essay aims to review this period of American women in the workplace, discuss their changing roles throughout the decades, and identify how women overall, and Christian women specifically, can thrive in their leadership potential. The Bible provides us several examples of women in leadership roles and the effect their work had not only on those around them but on entire nations. In the end, it is not just about thriving at work but thriving as a whole person in all areas of life. Perhaps in the past, this was simply called "balance," but this term paints a more reactive picture than a proactive one.

II. WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

It is hard to imagine that 100 years ago women in the United States did not have the right to vote, there was no such thing as television, and, in many areas, when making a phone call, you had to ask the operator who answered when you picked up the phone to make the call for you. Among the many changes that we now enjoy, the role of women in the workplace has also experienced a significant reshaping in the United States. Political, economic, social, and technological (PEST) factors have heavily influenced their role in the American workplace (See Appendix). Perhaps the most convincing evidence is present in the overall level of the female labor force participation rate, which is currently at 57% compared to 33% in 1948 (Schiller & Hill, 2014).

Past

Before World War I (1914-1918), women were primarily homemakers and cared for numerous children, which left little time for employment outside the home. Approximately 40% of single women were employed versus the fractional five percent of married women. This 35% gap persisted for many years. Unmarried women worked in clerical roles or as teachers and left the profession upon getting married to be full-time wives and mothers instead (Barnett, 2004; Schreiner, 2017). Educated middle-class married women were affected by *marriage bars*, the practice of restricting the employment of married women, which allowed men to gain the opportunity to provide for their families. This particular practice primarily targeted native-born white women. Women who did work were teachers, clerical operators, and midwives—assisting other women with in-home childbirths and receiving compensation through the barter system. Other career options included dressmaking, nursing, and domestic service. Lower class women and women of color who took jobs in manufacturing, waitressing, and domestic servants were less likely to be affected by *marriage bars*.

As the war effort increased, large numbers of women were recruited into factory jobs vacated by men who had gone off to fight in the war. Women commanded drill presses, used screw machines, operated cranes, and welded. They also became actively involved in non-manual labor opportunities such as production design, lab testing, warehouse work, and drafting rooms (Drury, 2015). When the war ended in 1918, men returned home and desired their jobs back. As men returned to the workplace, women became increasingly perceived as a threat. They faced discrimination, were paid less, and expected to produce the same quantity and quality of work as their male counterparts despite those challenges. This event, combined with a decrease in the demand for war production, set the stage for massive female layoffs.

A new decade began with the ratification of the 19th Amendment (1920), giving women the right to vote and expanding the Women's Suffrage movement. Electrification and the household appliance boom in the United States also made work around the house easier, leaving more time for women to consider school or work. Female representation in the armed services increased during World War II (1939-1945) as 350,000 women served in the U.S. Armed Forces, 100,000 in the Women's Army Corps (WAC), and 27,000 as members of the Naval Reserve program known as the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) (History.com, 2018). In addition,

60,000 Army nurses also served stateside and overseas during World War II. Recruited through popular songs, posters, and images of a woman factory laborer known as "Rosie the Riveter," the "We Can Do It" slogan led women back into factory work as they took up positions in the war industry building ships, aircraft, military weaponry, and ammunition. They sewed aircraft upholstery, painted radium on measurement instruments, operated hydraulic presses, and served as aircraft inspectors. Still, others worked as chemists and engineers, developing weapons for the war. Notably, thousands of women worked on the Manhattan Project developing the atomic bomb at nuclear facilities in Tennessee, Washington, and New Mexico.

Women also continued in less labor-intensive roles like nursing, truck driving, and logistics. Outside the war industry, women worked in the metal, steel, and automobile industries (Weatherford, 2008), and a variety of civil service jobs. Unlike World War I, when the war was over, women remained in the workforce, pursuing careers in banking, textiles, electronics, and in clerical, secretarial, and assembly work. Jobs, however, continued to be segregated by gender, and routine repetitive work was categorized as "women's work" in that they received lower wages for the same type of work that men performed.

Views on women in the workplace were consistent between men and women back in the 1930s. Based on a Gallup poll conducted in 1936, it was overwhelmingly believed that, if a woman was married and her husband made enough to support them both, she should not be out earning money. It was seen as a shame that she was taking the job of a man who might need that job to feed his family. This same Gallup poll was conducted again in 1972, and the outcome was flipped; the men and women surveyed approved of women in the workplace, regardless of her husband's ability to support the family (Caplow et al., 2001).

Present

While the first wave of the women's movement in the 19th century focused on suffrage issues such as gender equality, voting, and property rights (Fuller, 1845), the second wave, which began in the 1960s, addressed a wider range of topics including sexuality, family, and the workplace. Beginning in the early 1960s and lasting two decades, women were taking possession of their lives and careers and penetrated every layer of society (Time Magazine, 1976). They entered new fields, functioning with their sense of identity, integrity, and confidence. They began flooding colleges and graduate schools and entering professions in medicine, law, and business instead of education. In 1975, 25% of entering medical school students were female. Today, that number has doubled, and female matriculations have even exceeded that of men, 50.7% to 49.3%, even though the number of male applications remains slightly higher than females (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2018). Currently, academia continues to experience an increased presence in professorship, research, and student roles as women are outpacing their male counterparts, attaining more bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Chewning (2013) has accurately summarized the result of this crusade: "The feminist movement has encouraged younger women to believe in themselves: you are capable as men; you can compete on any and every front with the best of men" (p. 38).

In the public and private business sectors, Catalyst (2017) and Northouse (2019) posit that women are gaining momentum and representing more than half (51.5%) of managerial and leadership positions; however, they are still heavily underrepresented at the C-suite level in Fortune 500 companies, as they occupy a mere 5.4% of CEO positions (Brown, 2017). In the United States Congress, females represent 20% of the seats, slightly less than the global average for national legislatures, placing the United States' ranking at 101 of 193 countries (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017). As for the gender wage gap, Havens (2013) found that women receive 5% less in their first year out of college compared to their male peers even though they go to the same schools, receive the same grades, and major in the same subjects. This could be due to gender differences in negotiating salary and benefits at the time they were hired (Babcock, 2009). A more recent study by Artz et al. (2018) found that overall, women are asking for raises just as much as men, but are receiving them at smaller percentages. Their study, however, was centered on asking for a pay raise/promotion within an already established position, not necessarily a new hire.

Attitudes on whether someone would want a male or female boss has shown a preference shift. In a 1952 Gallup poll, men and women were asked who they would prefer as a boss: a man or a woman. This poll identified that 75% of the men said they would prefer a man, 21% were fine with either, and only 2% preferred a woman boss while 57% of the women in this study preferred a male boss and 8% preferred a female boss. This same study was repeated in November of 2017, and the results showed a dramatic shift. Men now preferred a male boss 19% of the time, 68% of the men were fine with either, and 13% preferred women. This study also showed that women now preferred a female boss 27% of the time, while they say that they had no preference for male or female 44% of the time, and preferred male bosses 28% of the time (Brenan, 2017). Gender bias in leadership preference can be rooted in the stereotypical expectations and perceptions of women in leadership roles (Northouse, 2019). These social stereotypes are dynamic, according to Diekman and Eagly (2000). The authors assert that culture continues to embed new social characteristics that individuals then adopt as their own characteristics (Diekman & Eagly, 2000).

Eagly and Karau (2002) discuss the balancing of feminine and masculine traits which women must carefully maneuver. They assert that "the role congruity theory of prejudice maintains that gender roles influence behavior even in the presence of a competing leadership role" (p. 590). Since women are seen to exhibit more *communal* (benevolent, trustworthy, moral) roles and men more *agentic* (competent, assertive, decisive), the balancing of these two could give the perception to others that they are less powerful, due to prejudice to a particular stereotype (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Current media today would have us think that many women are in executive positions around the country. Although there is a definite increase of women in middle management positions, the reality of the executive suite does not match the media's portrayal (Schwanke, 2013). This resistance to women in executive leadership roles could be exacerbated by the negative response exhibited toward women who exert high agentic behavior (Carli & Eagly, 2007).

Today, women are waiting longer to get married and have children. Some are choosing not to have children altogether, which has contributed to a decline in fertility rates—the average number of children born to a woman over her lifetime (Stone, 2018).

Women are continuing to work after marriage and have increased their earning power and leadership presence, as approximately 31% of heterosexual married or cohabitating couples report that women are the main household provider (Parker et al., 2017). Drucker (2018) believes that we are now in the midst of the third wave of the women's movement: an intersectional demonstration that considers the constructs of race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, faith, and internationality concerning feminism.

Future

What will be the trends in 2020 and beyond? It is hard to say. It would have been interesting to ask women in 1910 where they saw women in the workplace in the next 50-100 years. We have the privilege of hindsight to look at past trends. Also, we now have institutions that not only study what is happening but also make projections based on data they currently track. The Pew Research Center is one such organization that looks at the social and cultural trends here in America.

Based on Pew research from 2016, there seems to be growth in those occupations that require greater social and analytical skills such as analysts, engineers, and healthcare professionals. What is interesting is that these same occupations are the ones where wages are increasing at a faster rate. To make matters even more intriguing is the fact that women are the ones who make up a greater percentage of workers in these greater social and analytical skill occupations (Pew Research Center, 2016).

Another trend impacting the United States is the increasing representation of minority women in the labor force led by the Hispanic working population. The Hispanic women's labor force participation rate is estimated to be 57.4% by 2024, a 4.5% increase over 30 years. In the same time frame, the Asian women's labor force participation rate is expected to decline slightly from 56.9% to 55.7% as that of Black women, from 65.3% to 63.0% (Toossi, 2015). This has led to more languages, traditions, belief systems, and religions interacting together than ever before.

From an age perspective, the female labor force participation rate for females 55 and over are on the rise (Pew Research Center, 2016; Toossi, 2015). This is a stark contrast to the declining rate experienced by their male counterparts. Perhaps it is the result of the 2008 recession and those who thought they would retire earlier found it difficult to do so financially. Maybe it is the increasing lifespan, the fact that workers are delaying their retirement, or that there are now five generational groups interacting together. Whatever the cause, there will be a need for all the generational cohort-groups to work effectively together.

III. THRIVING AS A WHOLE PERSON IN TODAY'S WORK ENVIRONMENT

Playgrounds back in the 1960s had these round metal disk merry-go-rounds called "roundabouts" that kids could climb on, and an adult or bigger kid would turn the disk around and around. Sometimes the kids would jump off, but there was no guarantee where they would land and how the terrain surrounding their fall would treat them. It seems that the role of women in the workplace is ever-evolving, and, as one

jumps off the roundabout and into the workplace, it is often hard to know what one will encounter.

How does a woman survive the terrain? Better yet, how does one thrive amid whatever culture they are placed? We will now review some of the literature that discusses this important question. One thought to consider is that the emotional strength of a person has much to do with their perception of their circumstances and how they respond to others around them. The term "emotional intelligence" (EQ) became popular in the 1990s (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995, 1998), although it has roots that go back to the 1930s (Virkus, 2009). Now, more than ever, EQ is crucial to their success and in their ability to thrive in life, whether at work, in leadership, at home, or in relationships with others and with God.

Thriving at Work

Mercer conducted a study in 2016 that looked at women in the workplace across the world. The title of their report is a great summary of their findings: "When Women Thrive, Businesses Thrive." The Mercer study was an international study and concluded that, across the world, women are less represented in higher career positions. This is not just an American phenomenon. Women represent the following globally: "33% of managers, 26% of senior managers, and only 20% of executives" (Mercer, 2016, p. 129). However, a study conducted by Nordea in 2017 concluded that "companies run by women perform far better than the market" (Nordea, 2017, p. 1). These women-led companies provided double the return of those companies run by men. Companies would be wise to look at the financial impact women can have on their performance. Yet, how can women themselves thrive at work?

Access

For women to thrive in leadership roles, they first need access to senior leadership in order to participate in key roles within the organization. In the McKinsey/Lean-In.org report (Thomas et al., 2018), it was found that "[w]omen get less access to senior leaders than men do. Yet employees who interact regularly with senior leaders are more likely to ask for and receive promotions, stay at their companies, and aspire to be leaders" (p. 14).

Sponsorship

Many women who have had the opportunity to rise through the ranks of an organization have done so because of the sponsorship given them by a senior colleague who coached them and went to bat for them when challenging opportunities were available for the women to shine (Hewlett, 2013). Sponsorship is having someone in their corner, who sees their potential and takes the responsibility to showcase their strengths, and is an advocate for their ability. This has typically been a male coming alongside a female colleague, whom he sees great promise in, and then providing the boost her career needs.

Flexible Schedules

Because, for many women, work is not their only responsibility, having flexible schedules allows women to be fully present when working, knowing that their work time is being used for work; and they need to utilize their time well so they can focus on other responsibilities when they leave. Although this might keep them from a key leadership position at certain points in their career, it at least keeps them in the game, so that when other responsibilities lighten, they can take on more responsibility in the workplace and are positioned, with a seasoned track record, to do so.

In her study on women leaders and work/life balance, Brue (2018) found that 40% of the women surveyed felt that the boundaries they had constructed between work and home were clearly defined. Another 49% did not feel that they had set clear boundaries between work and home. Also, Brue (2018) found that women leaders who utilized sources outside the organization for social encouragement and mentoring had less "blurring" of home life and work life than those women who used internal sources of help. What was also enlightening in her research findings was that women often perceive work as the obstacle that interferes with family/personal life, as opposed to family/personal life interfering with work (Brue, 2018).

Research conducted by Kalysh et al. (2016) suggests that if companies begin to incorporate work-life policies, this would not only help alleviate some of the work/life issues for women but also hopefully provide more women the opportunity to advance. However, their work suggests that this was most beneficial for those women working in companies where there was a greater proportion of women in the workplace (Kalysh et al., 2016). These authors are also mindful that the result will not be evident immediately. The effects will not be seen for several years down the line.

Zero-Tolerance for Sexual Harassment

Creating an environment with zero-tolerance for any sexual harassment is a non-negotiable characteristic of a company committed to an environment for women to thrive. This is modeled from the executive level down throughout the company. The days of looking the other way or excusing behavior are over. The #MeToo movement has brought to light the prevalence of harassment in the workplace that has transpired over the decades. Women need the freedom to do their work well and to know that they are safe at their place of employment. This is a definite game-changer in corporate culture on down to the small family-owned business.

Strong Pipelines

Another finding from the Mercer study (2016) showed that companies are failing in their attempt (or aren't even attempting) to construct pipelines for women to rise in the ranks within their companies. In a phone interview for *Forbes*, Deborah Streeter expressed the following: "We're fine at one end of the pipeline; we just have a leaky pipeline" (Burns, 2017, p. 7). What is especially interesting about this is that women may be leaving companies not because of outside family responsibilities but because of a "leaky pipeline." A *Harvard Business Review* article discusses a study conducted by

Pamela Stone from Hunter College. In this study, she concluded that, although 60% of the women continued to work after the birth of their second child, of those who left, "90% left not to care for their families but because of workplace problems, chiefly frustration and long hours" (Harvard Business Review, 2013, p. 1). In addition, she discovered that many women faced being marginalized in their work if they opted to work part-time. Divisions were created between full-time and part-time employees. This climate of work "classism" is part of the foundation for a culture that makes it difficult for women to thrive (Stone, 2013).

The Christian Woman and Purpose

While Christian women face all the same concerns that other women in the workplace face, they hold both an additional disadvantage along with a helpful advantage. The local church traditionally has not encouraged women to step out of the home. Bock and Del Rosario (2019) report that "[a]lmost 80% of women over the age of 18 are working . . . and when you poll [working] women about the emotional support they feel from their local church, almost half would say they feel zero" (p. 222). Women are often made to feel that they are not taking care of their families in the most optimum way if they work outside of the home. What the church fails to accurately acknowledge is the example of the Proverbs 31 woman, who not only cares for her family in the most beautiful way, but who is also out in the workplace, wheeling and dealing successfully for the benefit of her family. She is a true 1 Timothy 5:8 woman: "Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (New International Version). This verse states it well: "anyone," no gender identified. Some translations use the pronoun "he" and "his"; however, it is the Greek pronoun *tis,* which, although it is grammatically masculine, provides the most inclusive identifier to translate "everyone" or "a person" (R. W. Pierce, personal communication, September 16, 2019). The local church can be one to empower women wherever they are in the workplace and encourage them in the place God has them. We are not advocating that all women should be out in the marketplace. On the contrary, many are called to be at home, whether it be for a season or more. However, the church should encourage women and equip them to honor God wherever they are placed: at home, in the workplace, or balancing both work and home.

An advantage that Christian women possess is because they live their lives for the Lord, they add *purpose* in the work they do. As believers, our work is another form of how we worship our God. We are reminded in Colossians 3:23 that "[w]hatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men" (English Standard Version). Just as we worship the Lord in our day-to-day living, the time spent in the workplace is a major part of our week. We have the benefit of a greater purpose—to honor God in all that we do. The story of the bricklayers building a cathedral may often be used to illustrate perspective, and it is also representative of the purposeful mindset and engagement one can have in their work. Christopher Wren was the architect commissioned to rebuild St. Paul's Cathedral after a fire destroyed the cathedral in 1966. The story has been told that he came across three men laying bricks. He asked the first man what he was doing and the man responded, "laying bricks." When he asked the second man what he was

doing, he responded, "putting up a wall." He then asked the third man what he was doing and was told, "I am building a cathedral to the Almighty" (Coker, 2012, p. 1).

In a 2015 Gallup employee engagement study, it was found that only 32% of those surveyed felt they were engaged in their work. Over half (50.8%) described themselves as unengaged, and even worse, 17.2% described themselves as "actively" unengaged (Adkins, 2016). Although admittedly, engagement can be defined in a variety of ways, even still, these numbers identify a tragedy in the workplace, and the impact of engagement needs further study.

Purpose matters and is the ingredient for greater effectiveness. In her work on vocation, Dorothy Sayers discusses the benefits of those who work for work's sake and those who work with a higher purpose. She argues that those who have a greater purpose in their work, work with more enthusiasm because they are contributing toward a specific outcome (Sayers, 1942, 2005). Purpose could then contribute to greater enjoyment in one's work, which could then spill over to one's attitude and work ethic. This is a clear advantage for Christian women (and men) in the workplace.

Deborah is a biblical example of a woman who embraced her purpose and calling. The book of Judges tells us in chapter four that she was a prophetess, a wife, and that she was *leading* Israel (New International Version). Another translation says she was *judging* Israel (English Standard Version). She had a lot on her shoulders at a time when the people of Israel were not walking with the Lord. Deborah was not afraid to confront Barak when he was not doing as God had commanded him. He chose to obey, but only if Deborah would accompany him in the pursuit. Her tenacity to make sure God's commands were followed, even if it meant she had to go into the battleground, was unwavering: "Barak said to her, 'If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go.' And she said, 'I will surely go with you'" (Judges 4:8-9, English Standard Version). Deborah had to then keep Barak on track. He was a military commander, but she was leading the efforts: "And Deborah said to Barak, 'Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the Lord go out before you?'" (Judges 4:14, English Standard Version). The actions that Deborah led brought the result that "that land had rest for forty years" (Judges 5:31, English Standard Version). She stayed on purpose with the call that God placed on her life and the results benefited the entire nation of Israel.

Thriving at Home

Work-Life Tension

It would be difficult to thrive in the workplace if a woman's home life is not thriving as well. There has been much discussion over the years about work-life balance. This topic is especially relevant for women as they are typically responsible for much of the day-to-day responsibilities of home and, unlike men with stay-at-home wives to take care of the home details, many of these working women take on dual roles of working outside the home and caring for much of the responsibilities inside the home as well. McKinsey's "Women in the Workplace" report (Krivkovich et al., 2017) found that over 50% of women surveyed were the ones who do the greatest share of the housework, many doing it all. If these women have children, it adds another layer of time and

diversion from the workplace. Russell (2010) discusses this word "balance" and its implication that everything is divided equally, and is therefore evenly balanced. This displays a pressure to make sure each piece of the pie is even, which adds extra stress along the way. In actuality, the slices are often different sizes, which is neither good nor bad. It is the perception that things should be evenly sliced that is faulty. Besides, there is no "one pie fits all." Each woman is unique in her circumstances—her season of life, home responsibilities, workplace position/responsibilities, values, etc. To thrive and pursue balance, Russell (2010) reminds us that, just like other resources given to us, we must steward each area well. How we allot our time is no exception.

The Christian Woman and Values

For the Christian woman, how she allocates her time can be viewed through the lens of biblical values and godly principles (Russell, 2010). If she is one who works out in the workplace, she helps provide financially for her family (1 Timothy 5:8). Yet provision is not limited to just the physical needs but can be extended to the emotional and spiritual needs of family members as well. The Greek word for provide is *pronoeó,* which develops the meaning "to foresee." It takes foresight to anticipate the needs of the family and plan well so that needs are cared for. There are seasons in a woman's life that can make this more challenging, but it is possible with a clear plan, and the ability to ask employers for what she needs to make it happen.

The woman portrayed in Proverbs 31 paints a picture of an industrious woman of commerce (Proverbs 31:13-14, 16, 18-19, 24), a provider for her family and workers (Proverbs 31:15, 21, 27), known for her wisdom (Proverbs 31:26), charity (Proverbs 31:20), kindness (Proverbs 31:26), optimism (Proverbs 31:25), preparedness (Proverbs 31:18, 21), hard work (Proverbs 31:27), and being a great wife on top of it all (Proverbs 31:10-12). Her reputation is known as a woman of integrity and a person you can trust. She would be an amazing mentor for those who wanted to learn from her work ethic, her expertise in negotiating, and running a household. Her example feels impossible to the woman of today, but it is a great reminder on how we are to conduct ourselves, that there is goodness in being in the marketplace, and that it is okay to have "maidens' (Proverbs 31:15) to help out. She's realistic to know that she couldn't do it without the extra help.

Thriving in Communication

Perceptions

We are reminded by Stewart and Bennett (1991) that language is more than just a tool to communicate; the way we use it also sets up how one is perceived and represents how one thinks. Also, we must remember that communication is more than just the words spoken—it is also the non-verbal elements of body language, tone of voice, eye contact, distance, timing, and even the fashion one is wearing. The non-verbal is additional commentary on the actual words that are being expressed (Stewart & Bennett, 1991). It would be worth examining and identifying how many times women have not communicated effectively because of the non-verbal cues they unintentionally

send—without being cognizant of why their communication was adversely affected. This can, sadly, be as simple as the tone of voice used to the way one dresses in the workplace.

Just as there are non-verbal elements of communication being expressed, there are also written and oral communication skills that are critical for any manager to possess. In a study done by Smeltzer and Werbel (1986), it was determined that there was no distinction in communication effectiveness when it came to written communication. However, oral communication is a much richer form of communicating where one can excel or find trouble. Sometimes it is within themselves and how they choose to communicate, but, as Smeltzer and Werbel (1986) express, there is often stereotyping of gender communication; this makes it more difficult for women if those they are managing or reporting to have a perception of women as being more talkative and indirect.

Feldhahn (2009) expressed it well when she said, "We as women can be skilled, talented, highly educated, mentored, networked—and yet trade all that away by unintentionally undermining ourselves in our interactions with male colleagues" (p. 3). To understand how male colleagues think and feel in the workplace is one of the most empowering career skills a woman must develop to succeed and move up the ranks within an organization. Feldhahn (2009) conducted much research on male/female communication in the workplace. Her book, *The Male Factor,* provides a greater understanding of how men think and how women are perceived based on how they communicate. Feldhahn (2011) also found that men and women alike form impressions of the other based on how they communicate—both verbal and non-verbal—and that both sexes need to make an effort to understand and adjust any incorrect perceptions. Otherwise, these misperceptions hinder working relationships and the overall effectiveness that each can have in an organization. Feldhahn's (2011) research identified that 66% of men agreed with the following question: "In your opinion, are there certain things that even skilled and talented women sometimes unintentionally do that undermine their effectiveness with men simply because they don't realize how they are being perceived by the men they work with?" (p. 10). It is the *unintentionality* that can leave both men and women with faulty perceptions that hinder the workplace.

Psychological Barriers

Krishnaveni and Thamaraiselvi (2008) identified potential psychological barriers that may be affecting women in their communication with others. They define effective communication occurring "only when the sender's ideas or thoughts are transmitted to and understood by the intended receiver in the same sense" (p. 30). Understanding the differences in how the people around us think is critical to effectively communicate. Feldhahn (2009) quotes R. D. Laing in her book, *The Male Factor*:

> The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And, because we fail to notice that we fail to notice, there is little we can do to change until we notice how our failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds (p. 2).

Acknowledging that people communicate differently, and observing those around us to identify how we can best communicate with them, requires observation, diligence, and humility. It is about learning to communicate effectively with others.

Krishnaveni and Thamaraiselvi (2008) found a significant correlation between self-awareness and communicative behavior for effective communication. The authors defined self-awareness as "observing one's own inner feeling, thinking, experience and needs prior to the communication process" (p. 33). They then defined communication process as "the way of conducting the interactions in the workplace" (p. 33) and identified six dimensions of the communication process: building trust, considerateness, consciousness, emotions, participation, and recognition. These authors determined that to be effective in the workplace, each woman must understand how they themselves communicate. In addition, women must realize that how they communicate lays the foundation for their communication effectiveness. This is not unique to women; however, it is more difficult for women to change how they are perceived once they have communicated ineffectively in the workplace. The authors believe that, when it comes to interpersonal behavior, being self-aware has a greater contribution than how one interacts (Krishnaveni & Thamaraiselvi, 2008).

Based on the research by Feldhahn (2009) and Krishnaveni and Thamaraiselvi (2008), it is recommended that women not only be a student of those around them in the workplace, but it is imperative that they also be a student of themselves to be self-aware, and therefore, most effective in their communication.

What Does Emotional Intelligence (EQ) Have to Do With It?

The increased demand for problem-solving work has placed a spotlight on the emotional intelligence, a leadership construct that addresses one's own emotions, as well as the impact that those emotions and actions have on others and the surrounding environment (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995, 1998). Coined by Salovey and Mayer and popularized by Harvard educated psychologist and New York Times contributor, Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence is described as follows:

> a form of self and social intelligence that involves the ability to accurately appraise and monitor one's self and others' feelings and emotions, using the information to guide thinking, action (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p.189), and the expression of those emotions (Goleman, 1995, p. 289).

According to Goleman (2011), research suggests that women are, on average, more effective than men at specific forms of empathy, while men do better than women when it comes to managing distressing emotions. For example, if a person is upset or emotions are strong, women's brains tend to stay with those feelings while men's brains quickly switch to other brain areas to try to solve the problem that is creating the disturbance.

Both men and women need to be aware of themselves as well as the social situations surrounding them in order to identify the useful and harmful emotions and reactions that may arise as they communicate and connect in the workplace. A man or woman with a strong EQ will be more self and socially aware and, as a result, be able to

communicate more effectively, defuse conflict, and serve as a mediator. A man or woman who responds (or reacts) in an ineffective way will invite negative perceptions and potentially make the situation even worse.

The Christian Woman and Wisdom

As followers of Christ, we understand that God has uniquely wired each of us, male and female, as well as each woman, uniquely herself. God has been involved in our wiring from before we were born: "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well" (Psalm 139:13-14, English Standard Version). As believers in Christ, we have a model in Christ to follow, as well as God's Word, which is rich with wisdom on how to communicate with others. Colossians 4:6 counsels us: "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person" (English Standard Version). How we communicate should be consistent with walking well before the Lord.

1 John 3:18 teaches us to "not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (English Standard Version). How Christians communicate in the workplace will be all the more effective and respected when the words that are communicated are consistent with the way their life is lived. When hard conversations that are often necessary in the workplace are communicated with love and care, speaking the truth in love, when backed up with a consistent walk, is impactful.

The book of Proverbs is full of practical communication wisdom: wisdom that God has given us so that we don't hurt ourselves or others around us. Wisdom such as Proverbs 18:13—"If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame" (English Standard Version)—speaks practical truth and provides ways of communicating that set a positive perception in the eyes of coworkers, managers, and others we encounter in the workplace. This is just one of at least 25 verses in Proverbs that addresses how our speech can be most effective. No self-help books are needed here to know what the God of the universe thinks about communication. Again, the Proverbs woman stands out as one who communicates wisdom and kindness in her speech: "She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue" (Proverbs 31:26, English Standard Version).

Thriving in Relationships

Demographics

Relationships at work can be encouraging, provide guidance, camaraderie, and a sense of place; yet, they can also be discouraging, stifling, and unengaging. Leadership can set the tone and make a difference, but research has shown that the company demographics can also be involved in setting the environment (Ely, 1994). In her research on demographics and social identity and their impact on the relationships women build in the workplace, Ely (1994) found that when there were few women in senior positions, three situations resulted: women were not as likely to view identifying with other women as a positive thing; women were not as likely to view these few senior women as role models with "legitimate authority"; and they were more prone to view

other women as competition and, consequently, these women did not support one another (Ely, 1994). With so few women in senior leadership, women looked at promotion possibilities as being a zero-sum game: only so many women would make it to the top, and if this other woman made it, then she could be taking your spot!

Relationship Barriers

Webber and Giuffre (2019) discuss this as a potential "barrier to solidarity" (p. 1). In reviewing existing literature on women's relationships with other women in the workplace, the authors sum up three themes they see rise to the surface as barriers to the support women could have for one another: "negative stereotypes about women at work, lack of recognition of gender inequality at work, and the devaluation of women's working relationships with other women" (p. 2).

When there are few women in senior leadership, this can be viewed as "tokenism," and when paired with a male-dominated corporate environment, negative stereotypes (such as "mean" and "bossy") can emerge (Webber & Giuffee, 2019, p. 2). This can also lead to female expectations of how other women will behave. This type of environment perpetuates the "queen bee" syndrome, where women are more protective of their position and space and do not use their position to help other women rise to the top. This is prevalent in male-dominated spaces where it is more difficult for women at lower levels to advance (Webber & Giuffee, 2019).

Webber & Giuffee (2019) discuss literature that suggests that possessing masculine qualities is a requirement that allows women access to a higher status and greater power. This way of thinking devalues (at least in perception) affinity or networking groups for women in the company. Although some women may enjoy these groups (typically holding lower-level positions), others would avoid them. They would not want to be associated with the women and would look to connect with the men, distinguishing themselves apart from the rest of the women who may be viewed as needing "special help" by participating in an affinity or networking group.

Sponsors

For many years, there was the idea that, if you wanted to advance, you needed to find someone to mentor you. Having a mentor who can give you wise advice is still a welcome and useful tool for any woman hoping to excel in her career. Yet what is needed also is a "sponsor." As mentioned earlier, a sponsor is seen as someone who is an advocate for you within the company. They are the ones who see potential in you and will put your name in the ring when opportunities come about. Current research shows that many women in senior positions see someone who was their sponsor as having a pivotal role in helping them advance the corporate ladder of their workplace (Hewlett, 2013).

Davidson (2018) built on this to show that support for women in the workplace is necessary for women to be successful in their pursuit of leadership roles. He describes the organizational culture as having gendered expectations with leader stereotypes, and that relationships in the workplace can serve not only the individual but the organization as well. He references the relational-cultural theory from Fletcher (2007) and explains

that the focus of this theory is "the positive outcomes associated with connections that are characterized by *mutuality*. Mutuality refers to the belief that both parties believe that it is important to contribute to the other's growth" (Davidson, 2018, p. 3). What a difference the culture of a business would take if they truly believed in mutuality, and if their growth was tied to the relationships they invested in.

Relational Advantages

In his work, Davidson (2018) identified ten advantages of work-related relationships from qualitative research he conducted with women in varying levels of leadership: mutuality/reciprocity, fun, continuity, validation, support/comfort, clarity of ideas/knowledge/perspective, safety to ask for help, strategizing/problem-solving, opportunity, and benefits to the organization. These advantages, as reported by Davidson (2018), identify benefits to both the company and individuals—both men and women—within the organization. It would be interesting to conduct further research to see if the presence of these healthy work-related relationships resulted in low employee turnover, greater employee productivity, and more women advancing in typically male-dominated industries.

Mentors and Discipleship

The *mutuality* described in Fletcher's (2007) relational-cultural theory is reminiscent of a discipleship model. As believers, we are given examples of the benefits of discipleship (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Proverbs 27:17; Romans 15:14; Titus 2:1-8). Also, there are stories in the Bible where we see a mentorship type of relationship have a strong impact (Jethro/Moses, Deuteronomy 31 and 34; Elijah/Elisha, 1 Kings 19 and 2 Kings 2; Naomi/Ruth, Ruth 1-4; Elizabeth/Mary, Luke 1). This same model can be used for shepherding someone in the workplace and is a beautiful example of how our faith and work are intertwined. As well, seeking out another colleague who is wiser and who can provide advice is humbling and extremely useful in navigating the workplace.

Christian women could bring their personal gender stereotypes of leadership from the church into the workplace (Miller & Stark, 2002); this would be a mistake. This would also apply to Christian men who bring their gender stereotypes to the workplace; these stereotypes have a detrimental effect on women advancing. No matter what your beliefs are on women and leadership in the church setting, we are discussing the corporate environment. There are no biblical restrictions to where a woman can advance in the workplace. Although she has relational guidelines (marital, sexual, etc.), any other restraints are merely cultural, not biblical.

Many women fall back to societal, cultural patterns. 2 Timothy 1:7 reminds us that, as Christians, we have the Lord's power, love, and self-control given to us by His Spirit. This should guide our relationships with both the men and women we encounter in the workplace. We are not to fear the relationships in the workplace but work in the power given to us by the Holy Spirit.

The relationship between Ruth and Naomi given to us in the book of Ruth in the Bible is a beautiful picture of a mentor relationship between women. The persistence of Ruth to stay with Naomi speaks volumes of the trust Ruth had in Naomi: "And when

Naomi saw that she [Ruth] was determined to go with her, she said no more" (Ruth 1:18, English Standard Version). Identifying a good mentor can be challenging. Ruth took hold of the opportunity to be with Naomi. Whether it was more out of obligation to her deceased husband to not let her mother-in-law go unaccompanied, or deep affection, we do not know. But even if that was the case, it shows the kind of woman Ruth was. Ruth took Naomi's counsel throughout their journey back to Naomi's homeland. She built a reputation that was admired and seen as deserving of honor. Ruth became known in the land as a "worthy" woman (Ruth 3:11, English Standard Version). The Lord blessed her to be King David's great-grandmother and part of the line of Jesus Christ.

Thriving Through Abiding

Our relationship with God is the most important relationship in our lives; this is irrespective of your gender and is true for all people. Time spent in nourishing our walk with the Lord is the most important appointment both women and men alike can schedule. To thrive in this way, we need to be connected to the vine. As Jesus taught His disciples in John 15:4-5,

> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (English Standard Version).

Thriving in our relationship with God requires abiding in the vine. Piper (2017) describes abiding in the following way:

> Abiding in the vine means receiving and believing and trusting in the words of Jesus. It means receiving the love of Jesus from the Father and for his people and the joy that Jesus has in the Father and in us. It means sharing the joy, the love, the words with Jesus (p. 2).

As a believer, thriving includes knowing where our strength comes from and acknowledging that, whatever we possess, we are merely stewards; it is all His, whether physical abilities, successes, or possessions. Deuteronomy 8:17-18a reminds us what the Lord said to the Israelites: "Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth" (English Standard Version).

Having a proper perspective on who God is and acknowledging that He is at work in our lives is a critical perspective to thrive in our walk with Him. Knowing and trusting in His faithfulness, which is always at work in our lives, is key to thriving wherever we are in life. The Christian woman must live in the truth that He is good, He is love, and He knows what she needs. By trusting Him in His sovereignty and His timing, the woman of God has a clear advantage in the workplace when it comes to weathering work and life because she knows Who her God is and rests in His character—no matter what comes her way.

Huldah is a name many would not recognize, yet she is a biblical example of a woman God used because of her relationship with Him. The Bible tells us that she was a wife and a prophet. The story of Huldah begins in 2 Kings 22:8 when the Book of the Law is found and read to King Josiah. King Josiah was one who walked with the Lord (unlike his father and grandfather, which somewhat explains why the Book of the Law had to be "found") and was grieved when he heard of the wrath of God upon Judah because the leaders who went before him had not obeyed God's commands. King Josiah could have gone to other popular prophets of the day, Habakkuk and Zephaniah were contemporaries of Huldah, yet the King sought out Huldah. He sent his men to her for counsel. It most likely was related to her reputation for being one who walked with God. King Josiah was distraught, grieved to the point of tearing his clothes. It is times like these one would call in the best and brightest, the one with the best connection. He called upon Huldah.

IV. CONCLUSION

The impact this past century has had on the American woman is a result of the myriad of changes in our world, and it has had a dramatic effect on the workplace. In reviewing the spectrum of factors contributing to the current work environment, it is clear that it will take both men and women working collaboratively to allow women to thrive in the workplace. Women need to be proactive in building their leadership potential. They need to be clear on what is right for them as they walk through each stage of their life. It is erroneous to think that there is a one-size-fits-all solution for women to thrive in the workplace. Each woman is unique, as are her circumstances. Women need to take inventory of who they are and what they need to thrive. To thrive in all areas of her life—understanding that each piece of her life may not be equal—she needs to be intentional and live according to the values she esteems. For women, thriving at work is a dynamic process that will hopefully be better understood and lived out in the years ahead.

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VI. APPENDIX

Significant Events by Decade

1900s

Political	● Women's Trade Union League founded to support working women (1903)
	● Mary Harris Jones leads a 125-mile march of child workers to bring the evils of child labor to the attention of President Roosevelt and the National Press (1903)
Economic	● The Gold Standard Act establishes gold as the only standard for redeeming paper money (1900)
	● The U.S. acquires the Panama Canal (1904)
Social	● Suffrage parades
	● Marie Curie becomes the first woman to receive the Nobel Prize for pioneering work in the field of radioactivity (1903)
Technological	● First Model T produced by the Ford Motor Company (1908)
	● First completely electric-powered washing machine introduced by the Hurley Machine Company (1908)
	● Wright brothers make the first controlled, sustained flight

1910s

Political	● National Association Opposed to Women Suffrage founded (1911)
	● World War I (1914-1918)
	● President Wilson states his support of the federal Woman Suffrage Amendment (1918)
	● The 16th (Tax Collection) and 17th amendments (Election of U.S. Senators) ratified (1913)
	● 25,000 women march up Fifth Avenue in New York City demanding the right to vote (1915)
	● The 18th Amendment (Prohibition) ratified (1919)
Economic	● Federal Reserve System begins (1913)
	● The Federal Trade Commission created to promote consumer protection (1914)
	● First U.S. Income Tax collected (1914)
	● The United States Post Office Department officially begins its first regularly scheduled airmail service (1918)

Social	• Girl Scouts of America founded (1912)
	• The Woman Suffrage Parade in Washington, D.C. organized by Alice Paul for the National American Suffrage Association (NAWSA) (1913)
	• Women recruited to work in factories (drill presses, welding, operating cranes, screw machines, metalworking equipment, etc.)
	• Jeannette Rankin becomes the first woman elected to Congress (1916)
	• The immigration into the U.S. hits an all-time peak of 8.8 million immigrants over ten years (1901-1910)
	• Influenza Epidemic—The first cases of one of the worst influenza epidemics in history were reported at Fort Riley, Kansas, eventually killing more than 500,000 Americans and more than 20 million people worldwide (1918)
Technological	• The first electric self-starting ignition was installed in a Cadillac by General Moters (1911)
	• First transcontinental telephone call (1915)

1920s

Political	• 19th Amendment (women's suffrage) ratified giving women the right to vote (1920)
	• The Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor is formed (1920)
Economic	• Sears, Roebuck, and Company opens its first retail store in Chicago (1925)
	• Worldwide economic crisis – stock market crash precipitates the Great Depression (1929)
Social	• League of Women Voters founded (1920)
	• American Birth Control League founded by Margaret Sanger (1921)
	• Nellie Taylor Ross of Wyoming inaugurated as the first woman governor in the United States (1925)
	• Gertrude Ederle becomes the first woman to swim the English Channel breaking previously held records (1926)
	• Beginning of the Great Depression (1929)
	• Iconic Chanel N°5 perfume created by Coco Chanel (1921)
	• Alexander Fleming discovers penicillin (1928)

| Technological | The first round-the-world flight completed (1924) John Logie Baird conducts the first demonstration of television (1926) Charles Lindbergh flies the Spirit of St. Louis across the Atlantic in the first solo transatlantic flight (1927) Amelia Earhart becomes the first woman passenger to fly across the Atlantic Ocean (1928) |

1930s

Political	- World War II begins (1939) - Hattie Wyatt Caraway of Arkansas becomes the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate to fill the vacancy caused by the death of her husband (1932) - The Social Security Act passed (1935) - The Fair Labor Standards Act passed setting the first minimum wage (1938) - The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission established (1934)
Economic	- The Dust Bowl - drought conditions in Oklahoma and Texas force tens of thousands of families to abandon their farms and seek employment elsewhere (1933) - Economic interventionist policies increase in popularity as a result of the Great Depression and Keynesianism replaces classical economic theory
Social	3M begins marketing scotch tape (1930) - Amelia Earhart flies solo across the Atlantic (1932) - Frances Perkins sworn in as Secretary of State of Labor, becomes the first woman in the U.S. Cabinet (1933)
Technological	- Television sets produced and released commercially (1938) - Nuclear fusion discovered by Otto Hahn, Lise Meitner, and Fritz Strassman (1939)

1940s

| Political | Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1945) World War II ends (1945) United Nations founded (1945) |

	● State of Israel founded (1948)
	● Korean War begins (1949)
Economic	● The World Bank created (1944)
	● The International Money Fund created (1945)
	● General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) established (1948)
Social	● Millions of women enter the workforce during WWII (1941-1945)
	● Women's Army Auxiliary Corp. established (1942)
	● The Diary of Anne Frank (1947)
	● Gandhi assassinated (1948)
	● Apartheid begins (1948)
	● TV: Milton Berle, Ed Sullivan, Howdy Doody
Technological	● First computer built (1945)
	● First atomic bombs detonated (1945)
	● First organ transplant (1949)

1950s

Political	● Beginning of the civil rights movement (1954)
	● Beginning of the Vietnam War (1955)
	● Rise of global tensions due to the Cold War
Economic	● Diners Club debuts as the first credit card (1950)
	● Nation begins to enjoy an economic boom giving rise to the American middle class
	● American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) established (1955)
Social	● Rock n' Roll emerges from Gospel, Jazz, and R & B
	● Color TV introduced and becomes a common household item in 8 million American homes (1951)
	● Hillary and Norgay climbs Everest (1953)
	● Jacqueline Cochran becomes the first woman to break the sound barrier (1953)
	● Hugh Hefner founded *Playboy* magazine
	● Rosa Park refuses to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama (1955)
	● Barbie doll introduced (1959)
	● TV Guide is the #1 magazine in the nation

Technological	● TV: I Love Lucy, The Honeymooners, Father Knows Best, The Lone Ranger ● DNA discovered (1953) ● Dr. Jonas Salk polio vaccine introduced (1953) ● Sputnik and the dawn of the Space Age (1957)

1960s

Political	● Vietnam War continues ● Civil rights movement continues ● The Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) ● Equal Pay Act of 1963 – Amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act aimed at abolishing wage disparity based on sex (1963) ● Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 makes it illegal to exclude anyone from an opportunity based on gender (1964) ● Shirley Chisholm becomes the first black woman elected to the House of Representatives (1968)
Economic	● American economy purrs along fueled by the Vietnam War ● "Guns and Butter:" Congress and the Presidential expansion of social programs at home and in support of war efforts without raising taxes ● Lyndon Johnson promises to wage war on poverty in his first State of the Union address (1964)
Social	● John F. Kennedy assassinated (1963) ● Cultural revolution in China (1966) ● Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated (1968) ● Robert Kennedy assassinated (1968) ● Woodstock (1969) ● Roughly 80% of married, childbearing-age women utilizing some form of contraception (by late 60s) ● TV sets in 78 million in U.S. homes ● TV: Leave it to Beaver, The Beverly Hillbillies, Bewitched, Ed Sullivan Show, Star Trek, That Girl, The Andy Griffith Show,
Technological	● The first birth control pill goes to market (1960) ● Moon landing (1969) ● The first working video game console prototype completed (1968)

1970s

Political	● U.S. Supreme Court rules unanimously that busing students may be ordered to achieve racial desegregation of schools
	● Row vs. Wade overturns state laws restricting rights to abortions (1973)
	● Watergate scandal (1973)
	● End of the Vietnam War (1975)
	● Laws restricting women from jury duty because of household duties eliminated (1975)
	● The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 (1978)
Economic	● Global energy crisis hits the global economy (1973)
	● Stagflation (high unemployment and high inflation)
Social	● Women's liberation demonstrations
	● *Time* magazine selects the "American Woman" as the "Man of the Year" (1975)
	● Margaret Thatcher appointed first woman British Prime Minister (1979)
	● Bill Gates and Paul Allen founded Microsoft Corporation (1975)
	● Steve Jobs and Stephen Wozniak founded Apple (1976)
	● AIDS identified (late 70s)
	● TV shows: The Brady Bunch, Sesame Street debuts, MASH, All in the Family, The Mary Tyler Moore Show, Charlie's Angels, Happy Days
Technological	● Motorola produces first handheld mobile phone (1973)
	● First personal computers built (1975)
	● Tandy and Apple make the first personal computers
	● Videocassette recorder (VCR) introduced

1980s

Political	● Iran-Contra affair (1985-1987)
	● President Bush and Soviet Premier Gorbachev release statements indicating that the Cold War may be ending (1989)
Economic	● Economic recession as a result of the disinflationary policy adopted by the Federal Reserve (1980 and 1982)
	● Stock markets around the world plunge (1987)

Social	● Farm Crisis continues and suffering is compounded by serious droughts (1986, 1988)
	● The Reagan Revolution and Reaganomics (1980-1989)
	● John Lennon murdered (1980)
	● Sandra Day O'Connor becomes the first woman seated on the U.S. Supreme Court (1981)
	● Sally Ride becomes the first American woman in space (1983)
	● Geraldine Ferraro becomes the first woman nominated for vice-president by a major party (1984)
	● World population hits 5 billion (1987)
	● Uprising in Tiananmen Square (1989)
	● TV: Roseanne, The Cosby Show, Married with Children, Dallas, Dynasty, Cheers, Family Ties, Magnum, P. I., The Golden Girls, Moonlighting, Hill Street Blues, Newhart, The A-Team
	● Subscription television boom and bust (SelectTV, ONTV)
	● Premium cable and satellite television popularized (MTV, Showtime, HBO, etc.)
Technological	● The Space Shuttle Columbia is launched, marking America's first return to space since 1975 (1981)
	● Formal tracking of AIDS cases begins (1983)
	● Apple introduces the Apple Macintosh personal computer with a graphical user interface (1984)
	● Scientists announce the discovery of a hole in the ozone layer over the Atlantic (1985)
	● Challenger explosion (1986)
	● Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant disaster (1986)
	● Exxon Valdez oil spill (1989)

1990s

Political	● Berlin Wall comes down (1991)
	● Desert Storm (1991)
	● The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993
	● Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (1994)
	● Apartheid ends (1994)
	● Congress passes the Violence Against Women Act (1994)

	● North American Trade Agreement (NAFTA) becomes law (1994)
Economic	● Economic recession resulting from the Savings and Loan Crisis (1990-1991)
	● Strong economic growth, steady job creation, low inflation, rising productivity, economic boom, and a surging stock market
	● Rapid technological advancements and sound central monetary policy
Social	● Record-breaking number of women elected to Congress (1992)
	● Janet Reno becomes the first woman to hold the office of Attorney General of the U.S. (1993)
	● Timothy McVeigh bombs the Oklahoma City Federal Building (1995)
	● Madeleine Albright is sworn in as the first female Secretary of State (1997)
	● Princess Diana dies (1997)
	● J. K. Rowling publishes the first Harry Potter book (1997)
	● President Clinton/Monica Lewinsky White House intern affair (1998)
	● Columbine High School shooting, Colorado (1999)
	● Y2K scare (1999)
	● U.S. Women's soccer team wins the World Cup in the U.S. (1999)
	● TV: The Simpsons, Friends, Seinfeld, Star Trek: The Next Generation, ER, South Park, X-Files, The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, Beverly Hills 90210, Fraiser, Boy Meets World
	● Cable: The Sopranos, Sex in the City
Technological	● Internet accessibility & the first web browser
	● Popularity of Google, YouTube, Wikipedia, eBay, Netflix
	● Scottish scientists cloned a sheep named Dolly (1997)
	● Anti-impotence drug Viagra is introduced to the market (1998)
	● The Dot-Com bubble, boom and bust (1994-2000)
	● Amazon founded (1994)
	● Google founded (1998)

2000s

Political	• Corporate scandals (Enron, Arthur Anderson, WorldCom, Tyco) (early 2000s)
	• War in Afghanistan (2001)
	• War in Iraq (2003)
	• The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act is signed into law, protecting those who face pay discrimination (2009)
Economic	• Sub-Prime Housing Crisis and the housing bubble
	• The Great Recession (2007-2009)
	• The collapse of Wall Street (2008)
Social	• 9/11 terrorist attacks (2001)
	• Letters laced with anthrax poison mailed to media and government officials (2001)
	• Condoleezza Rice serves as the first African American Secretary of State (2005)
	• Hurricane Katrina hits New Orleans (2005)
	• YouTube posts first videos (2005)
	• Nancy Pelosi becomes the first female Speaker of the House of Representatives (2007)
	• TV: The West Wing, Survivor, Gilmore Girls, 24, American Idol, The Bachelor, Lost, Desperate Housewives, The Office, 30 Rock,
	• Cable: Mad Men, Entourage, Keeping up with the Kardashians, Curb Your Enthusiasm
Technological	• Rise of social media
	• Netflix begins streaming services
	• Space shuttle Columbia explosion (2003)
	• Apple introduces the first iPod to market (2004)
	• iPhone introduced (2007)
	• DVR replaces the VCR (2008)

2010s

Political	• The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 requires specific private areas for nursing moms to pump breast milk while at work (2010)
	• Osama Bin Laden killed (2011)
	• Brexit referendum—withdrawal of the UK from the European Union (2016)

	● The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 – requires that companies who settle a sex discrimination suit cannot claim payment as tax-deductible unless there is no non-disclosure agreement involved (2017) ● Trump/Russia special counsel investigation (2017) ● North Korean weapons testing (2017) ● The first summit between the U.S. and North Korea and the first-ever crossing of the Korean Demilitarized Zone by a North Korean leader (2018) ● College Admission Schemes discovered (2019)
Economic	● Occupy Wall Street protests begin (2011) ● Cost of War on Terror escalates U.S. debt (2018) ● China surpasses Japan to become the World' second-biggest economy (2010) ● The S&P downgrades the United States' credit rating from triple AAA to AA-plus following a debt ceiling crisis (2011) ● The trend towards a cashless society continues as non-cash transactions and digital currency increase in favorability
Social	● The average life expectancy rate in the United States continues to decrease as a result of increasing deaths due to drug overdoses and suicides (2019) ● Frequent mass shootings and bombings ● World population reaches 7 billion (2011) ● Hurricane Sandy in the Atlantic (2012) ● #MeToo Movement (2017) ● Hurricanes Harvey, Maria, Irma, and Dorian ● TV: Big Bang Theory, Modern Family, Bob's Burgers, Parks and Recreation ● Cable TV/Streaming: Game of Thrones, The Americans, Star Wars: The Mandalorian, Watchmen, Fleabag, Stranger Things, *GLOW,* Mindhunter, Breaking Bad, Narcos, Black Mirror, Westworld, and Homeland ● Popularization of video and audio streaming services (Netflix, Hulu, Disney+, Amazon Prime, Spotify, Apple Music, etc.)
Technological	● 3d Printing, Automation, and Artificial Intelligence ● iPad introduced (2010) ● BP Gulf Oil spill (2010) ● The end of the NASA shuttle space program (2012) ● Ebola epidemic (2014) ● Outbreak of the Zika virus (2016)

	● Continued growth of the Mobile Application EcoSystem (2019)
	● Improvements in autonomous, self-driving vehicles and artificial intelligence (AI)
	● Movement towards Web 3.0, the Semantic Web (2019)

The Year 2020 (January - June)

Political	● President Trump signs the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (January)
	● U.S. Senate acquits President Donald Trump on articles of impeachment (February)
	● U.S. drone strikes Bagdad International Airport killing Iranian general Qasem Soleimani (January)
	● Black Lives Matter protests caused by the killing of George Floyd break out across hundreds of cities in the United States and around the world (May)
	● Joe Biden announced as Democratic candidate for president (June)
	● The White House officially moves to withdraw the United States from the World Health Organization (WHO) due to its handling of the Coronavirus pandemic (July)
Economic	● Global stock markets crash and oil prices plummet
	● The Federal Reserve cuts the federal funds rate to zero (March)
	● Schools close, restaurants shift to takeout/pickup only, events suspended/canceled, social distancing, and panic buying
	● Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economics Security (CARES) Act provides $2 trillion in economic relief for American workers, families, and small businesses (March)
	● The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan program established to help businesses, self-employed workers, sole proprietors, non-profit organizations, veterans' organizations, and Tribal businesses (June)
	● Soaring unemployment rate—over 40 million Americans file for unemployment (July)
Social	● Basketball legend Kobe Bryant and daughter Gianna die in Calabasas helicopter crash (January)

	● Coronavirus outbreak: The World Health Organization (WHO) declares COVID-19 a global pandemic (February/March)
	● The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Japan suspend the 2020 Summer Olympics (March)
	● The United States records its highest ever number of daily COVID-19 infections, more than 65,000 cases in a single day (As of July 11th)
	● Number of COVID-19 passes 3.2 million cases and 134,000 deaths in the United States; More than 12.6 million cases and 561,000 deaths globally (July)
	● Influential soul singer Betty Wright, actress and Emmy award-winning writer Mary Pat Gleason, and American diplomat Jean Ann Kennedy Smith die
	● Katherine Johnson, mathematician and a black woman who helped power NASA's space travel in the early 1960s dies at 102 (February)
	● Shows: Tiger King, The Good Place, Hunters, The Outsider, The Last Dance, NCIS, This is Us, The Conners, Unsolved Mysteries, Greatness Code, Hamilton, The Baby-Sitters Club
Technological	● Circumbinary exoplanet called TOI 1338-b is discovered by a high school intern at NASA on his 3rd day on the job (January)
	● SpaceX Dragon 2 is launched from Cape Canaveral (May)