

Working Single:

How Marital Status Affects Treatment in the Workplace

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Introduction

45% of American adults are single. Despite the shift in demographics, American society is still built around and geared towards the nuclear family that is and less and less the norm.

Governmental and workplace benefits, particularly tax laws, explicitly privilege the married. This capstone project explores why this is so, and if it can change.

Methods

To uncover the historical, legal, and social factors affecting women in the workplace, I looked at histories of marriage, scholarly research, and contemporary writings on marriage and singleness.



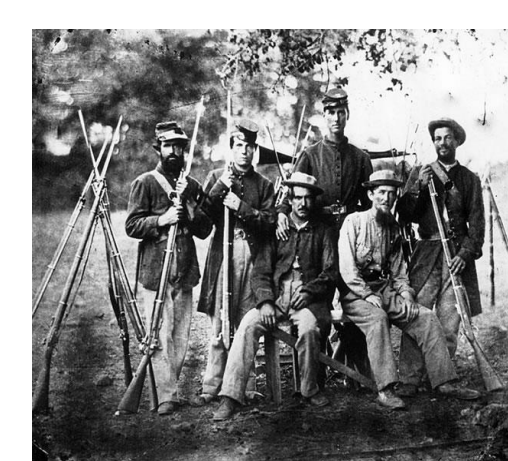
History

Early America



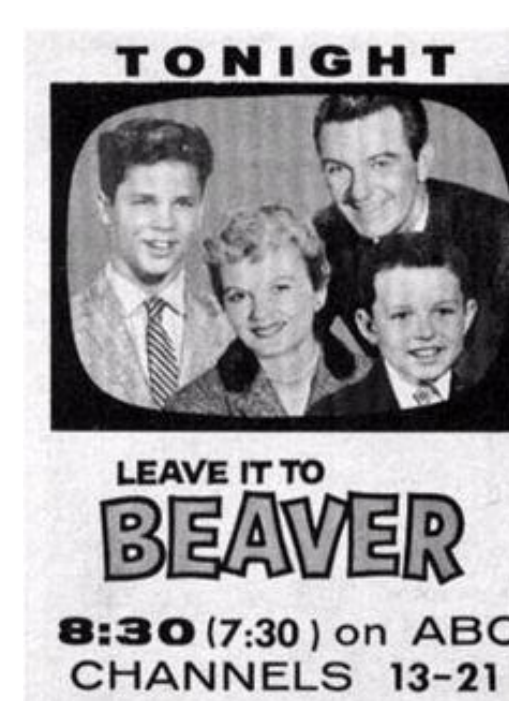
From the 1600's to the Civil War, women had few rights and few opportunities to work.

War



Fewer men meant more women could have an independent income, making it easier to live on their own.

"Traditional Family"



In the 1950s, women married early. The unmarried were viewed with suspicion.

Feminism



The women's movement improved things for all women, but ignored some issues vital to unmarried women.

How Men Were Affected

In early America, unmarried men were almost nonexistent. They were seen as odd.

As women gained civil rights, certain rights affecting single women did not change. These rights affect today's single men.

The negative images of single women also transferred to men, but not to the same extent.

Theories

Legitimacy of the Institution – marriage is seen as the legitimate type of relationship in American society.

"Matrimania" – the glorification of marriage as a superior state, above what it can actually accomplish.

Developmental Life Tasks Theory – a normally developing adult should reach certain milestones by a certain age, and if he/she does not, it is a sign of immaturity.

Cultural Lag – when one aspect of society changes in a significant way, the rest of society doesn't always change at the same time.

Singles can receive less compensation and benefits in several ways.

Income



The "marriage benefit": married men make more money than single men.

Benefits



"Family-friendly" benefits can mean unequal compensation.

Income Tax



The "single" filing status results in a tax penalty for singles. Every time.

Social Security



Several Social Security benefits are unavailable to singles.

Changing It

Singles unite! Singles are not a homogenous group. The different factions of singles need to find common ground and a common voice.

Get out the vote; petition for change in the workplace. Singles vote less than married individuals. 45% of the adult population can create a powerful voting bloc. Employees can vote with their feet and move to more progressive workplaces.

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Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to my capstone advisor, Polly Strong, and my second reader, Mary Rose. Your insights made my capstone stronger. Thanks also to Art Markman for accepting me to the program, to Amy Ware, Jessica Crawford, and Rolee Rios for keeping me straight, to all of my professors for expanding my mind, and to the most fabulous cohort I could have asked for. I will dearly miss you all.

Contact me!



I would love to discuss my capstone with you!

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