**HI373 12-4-95** 1960S -- LECTURE ONE

**CUT READING**

**ASK ABOUT THEIR MOTHERS -- REL TO THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE/THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT**

**TRANSPARENCY OF NOW STATEMENT OF PURPOSE?**

movts for women's rights generally emerge in the ferment of widespread social change

women discover and create spaces in which they can develop a collective identity and a shared sense of rights and possibilities.

1960s -- signs of change on many levels

Feb 1960 four black students in Greensboro, NC sat at a Woolworths lunch counter and refused to leave (threats, arrest)

their actions inspired young blacks across the South-

began sit-ins, kneel-ins, wade-ins, and other challenges to segregation

civil rights movt that grew from this provided

a new model for social change, and

a language about equality, rights, and community

transformed public discourse in the decade

among other things, emerging civil rights ferment changed the idiom of politics,

re-emphasizing themes of community and civic participation that had long since been eclipsed

election of JFK in 1960 --

further encouraged new civic idealism: "Ask not what your country can do, but what you can do for your country."

in 1960 too, mass media (NYT, Newsweek, Redbook, Time, CBS television) suddenly discovered the "trapped housewife"

conflicts and contradictions that had been building over previous decade came to a culmination in new atmosphere of ferment

twice as many women attended college in 1960 than a decade before,

led *Newsweek* to worry about "Young wives with Brains: Babies, yes--But what else?"

in most cases, "what else" = workforce participation

but women concentrated in low-paid clerical and service jobs

women's wages was actually diminishing relative to men's

(60 cents on the dollar -down from almost 64 cents a decade before)

another thing that was different in 1960: the re-emergence of the single white woman

after 1957 marriage ages had begun to creep up, birthrates to fall

headlong rush into domesticity began to reverse

(revealed as an aberration in long-term trends)

1960: FDA approved a new form of contraception, the birth control pill

first time contraception separated from the act of sexual intercourse

pill also extremely effective

broadened the possibilities for recreational sex, not linked in any way to procreation or necessarily to domesticity

another change: cold war truths dissolving

East-West global axis, with self-congratulatory implications for Americans,

complicated by proliferation of independent nation-states in the Third World...

On the fringes of college campuses, young people gathered to

talk about the terrors of nuclear war,

criticize the materialism and hypocrisy of American culture

Beatniks like Jack Kerouac challenged American mass culture but hardly its sex roles

women found little room for liberation there,

but they did in groups like the Fellowship of Reconciliation and Women's Strike for Peace

also found expanded social conscience in changing awareness of poverty –

Michael Harrington's *The Other America (1962)*

majority of adult women were still housewives

for them, the social changes of the sixties brought serious dilemmas

still dealing with the very restrictive cultural definition of women's proper domestic roles

many lived in the suburbs that emerged in the fifties

there they had devised women's networks akin in some ways to what we see in the 19th century

neighborhood associations, parenting and consumer groups

Growing community activities of middle-class women briefly generated a new form of politicized domesticity

Women's Strike for Peace (begun by five women)

response to the atmospheric tests of nuclear weapons --

also a defiant reaction against the way that the witchhunts of the McCarthy era had turned peace activists against each other

strike to take place Nov. 1, 1961

word spread through female networks in the PTAs, League of Women Voters, peace organizations, and personal contacts

50,000 women took part in day-long lobbying effort directed at politicians to "End the Arms Race -- Not the Human Race"

within next year, original organizers had helped to start groups in 60 communities

most activists in WSP were educated middle-class mothers/ 61% did not work outside the home

most had been liberal or radical in the 40s –

after repressive 1950s, now found themselves remobilizing out of fears for their children's futures

for many, domesticity was too closed-off and cloistering to be compatible with social activism

working-class and poor housewives had an even more restrictive definition of domesticity than their middle-class counterparts

also less self-confidence about their own accomplishments

lives taken up with daily drudgery of making ends meet

characterized by tensions with husbands over proper roles for women, material needs of family

poor black women often found selves the heads of families -- at a time when decades of severe unemployment among black men prevented them from heading families themselves

even in urban ghettos -- reliance on traditional elasticity of black family to survive -- fictive kin, mutualism

struggles for minority rights in 60s initially at least the province of middle-class women of color

when we think of Civil Rights, we tend to think of male leaders like MLK

but women also played a central part

opp's for female leadership in the civil rights movt most open at the grassroots

within MLK's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, women like Ella Baker, Septima Clark, and Dorothy Cotton conceived and led the Citizenship Education program

their efforts in terms of Citizenship Education laid the groundwork for many civil rights demonstrations

women also key in the radical wing of the Civil Rights movement, the SNCC

SNCC founded because Ella Baker had persuaded SCLC to a meeting in April 1960 for participants in the sit-in movement

intensely personal nature of participation in SNCC

openness to youthful initiative

made it possible for many women to join and lead demonstrations against segregation and

and to organize communities for voter registration

female organizers were refused bail and were jailed again and again, thereby gaining the respect of their colleagues.

civil rights movt transformed many parts of the South between 1960 and 1967

eliminated the humiliations of public humiliations of public segregation

integrated school systems

empowered black voters

but black Americans remained extremely poor while discrimination assumed increasingly subtle forms

Pub op shifted decisively toward a belief that racial discrimination was wrong, and **the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal**

in 1960, black women had remained restricted to domestic and other menial, segregated jobs or to professional jobs within the black community

after 1964, their econ opp's opened up to include jobs previously open only to white women

**number of black women in clerical and sales jobs increased between 1960 and 1970 from 17 to 33% in northern states and from 3 to 11% in the South**

**proportion of black women in domestic service dropped from 36% in 1960 to 15% in 1970**

**in the North, black women earned 95 cents for every dollar earned by white women in 1970, compared to less than 80% in 1960**

**of course, white women's wages still remained about 60% of white men's**

poorest blacks faced deteriorating conditions as single parents in inner-city ghettos.

on the other hand, working- and middle-class black women found new opportunities in the late 1960s in spite of racial prejudice

and by the 1970s they had found a new voice

the infectious nature of the black struggle, with its stirring stories of courage and reclaimed dignity, spurred other groups to action as well.

civil rights movt in the black community also inspired the renewed struggle among other groups for women's rights

from the beginning of the new "second wave" women's movt, a number of black women involved:

Dorothy Height, Pres of Natl Council for Negro Women

lawyer Pauli Murray

Representative Shirley Chisolm

most black women and other women of color pursued their own trajectories toward feminism, apart from white-dominated women's organizations

initiation of new feminist sensibility came from two groups of women, both inspired by the new civil rights movt:

first: primarily professional women

second: drew on younger radical activists and posed a broader cultural challenge to accepted definitions of femininity and sexuality

latter group more radical, but lacked the seasoned political expertise of the older group

**REST OF TIME: TALK ABOUT THE FIRST GROUP**

through the fifties a small network of women within the department of labor and tiny remnants of the NWP had sustained antagonistic voices of feminism

Kennedy appointed new woman to run Women's Bureau: **Esther Peterson**

she persuaded Kennedy to appoint a **Presidential Commission on the Status of Women**

Chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt and strongly directed by Peterson

the Commission set about reassessing women's place in the economy, the family, and the legal system

because the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor was behind the Commission, and so most participants were pro-labor, the commission opposed the ERA that had been kept alive by the NWP

**recall the conflict between the NWP and pro-labor feminists dating back to the 20s?**

the commission's members supported equality before the law of the land, but they contended that this was already guaranteed under the fifth and fourteenth amendments to the Constitution

therefore no amendment was needed "now"

**commission's final report (1963)** documented problems of

discrimination in employment

unequal pay

lack of social services such as child care

and continuing legal inequality

immediate consequences:

presidential order requiring the civil service to make hiring decisions solely on the basis of the ability to meet the requirements of the position, without regard to sex

passage of the **Equal Pay Act in 1963** that made it illegal to have different rates of pay for women and men who did the same work

this was the first time that the federal government restricted discrimination against women by private employers

the commission activated a network of professional women whose growing concerns had found no outlet in the previous decade

more and more reform efforts were implemented through the network of professional women on the Presidential Commission

by 1964, there were state-level commissions, modeled on the Presidential Commission, in most states

these state-level activities fostered concern about women's status and creative thinking about solutions

most of the women who undertook the research of the commissions were stunned by what they learned about the pervasiveness and systematic nature of discrimination against women

ERA and labor legislation advocates were able to overcome their differences, as all worked to expose sex discrimination and work to remedy it

**also 1963 (same as Pres. Comm. Rept): Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique**

Friedan blamed educators, advertisers, Freudian psychologists, and sociologists for forcing women out of public life

and into a passive and infantalizing domesticity

She advocated work outside the home as the answer to what she called "the problem that has no name"

unprepared for all the mail she received

from all over country, women writing to thank her for naming their unhappiness and telling her their own stories

"In seeking that something "more" out of life, I have tried large does of everything from alcohol to religion, from a frenzy of sports activities to PTA... to every phase of church work... Each served its purpose at the time, but I suddenly realized that none had any real future."

A suburban housewife wrote to Friedan claiming that she and her female neighbors were depressed and self-destructive. Describing herself as brilliant with "an IQ in the 145-150 range," a compulsive eater, and occasionally suicidal, she summarized her life:

"I 'caught' a husband at 19, married him on my 20th birthday, quit school pregnant, and now have six children! I am the typical stay-at-home, domineering mother and wife. I love my children yet I hate them, have actually wished them dead."

all of this set the stage for the debate on **the 1964 Civil Rights Act**

**Title VII of the act would prohibit discrimination in employment on the basis of race, creed, and national origin**

**the question was whether it should also include "sex"**

**Ho**ward Smith, elderly Sen from Virginia proposed the amendment

pro-ERA, also a segregationist -- probably hoped that it would kill the bill

Act passed as amended -- since has become perhaps the strongest legal tool yet available to women

**Civil Rights Act issued in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)**

immediately flooded with women's grievances

but at first women's grievances not taken seriously by male administrators

some thought inclusion of "sex" in law something of a joke -- called it the "bunny law"

EEOC even approved the continued use of separate want ads for women and men

women who participated in the Presidential and state-level commissions became alarmed at women's lack of support within the EEOC/Washington bureaucracy

realized that women lacked the polticial clout to ensure that Title VII be enforced

Friedan, a commisssion insider, together with other women got together to discuss means of ensuring govt accountability to women

**created NOW -- the National Organization for Women -- (1966)** with a clear statement of purpose:

"To take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, assuming all the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship thereof in truly equal partnership with men."

NOW represented in some ways a modernized version of the Seneca Falls Declaration by reclaiming for women the republican ideals of equal participation and individual rights.

But its organizers were skilled at lobbying, not movement building

NOW did not immediately grow into a national movt -- founders did not have required org'g skills

founders recognized that women were profoundly disadvantaged within the Am pol and legal system, but they presumed a model of political activity that was esstly individualist

bonds of sisterhood remained at first unarticulated and depoliticized

most women still could not identify with the clear-cut dilemmas of the professional woman

influences:

the feminine mystique

gender-segregated economy,

and child-centered family based on the premises of the full-time services of a wife/mother,

meant that the average woman could not abstract issues of rights from the underlying questions of identity

next time: the younger group – summary

**THE WOMEN’S MOVEMENT – PART I**

1. Context: the 1960s
2. Civil rights movement
3. new model for social change
4. new language about equality, rights, community
5. Election of JFK – civic idealism
6. Mass media’s discovery of the “trapped housewife”
7. Demographic changes
8. more college-educated women
9. more women in workforce, but in low-paying jobs
10. more white women remaining single
11. Birth control pill
12. Dissolution of Cold War truths
13. Growing awareness of poverty
14. Status of Housewives in 1960s

A. Most adult, white women still housewives in 1960

1. lived in suburbs
2. devised women’s networks akin to 19th-century women’s networks
3. neighborhood associations, parenting and consumer groups
4. political example: Women’s Strike for Peace
5. Situation of working-class and poor housewives
6. even more restrictive definition of domesticity than in middle class
7. focused on material needs of family
8. Poor African-American women -- often heads of households, reliant on traditional elasticity of black family forsurvival
9. Women and Civil Rights
10. Civil rights activism initially the province of middle-class women of color
11. Women’s role in civil rights movement has been understated
12. opportunities for female leadership at grassroots
13. Ella Baker, Septima Clark, Dorothy Cotton -- SCLC’s Citizenship Education program
14. women also important in SNCC (radical wing)
15. intensely personal nature of SNCC participation enabled women to join/lead demonstrations/organize voter registration
16. Civil Rights Act of 1964
17. helped eliminate subtle forms of discrimination
18. enhanced black women’s economic opportunities
19. Women’s Movement
20. Inspired in large part by African-American struggle for justice
21. some black women involved in women’s movement
22. most black women and other women of color pursued own course toward feminism
23. most women’s organizations white-dominated
24. Two branches of the women’s movement

1. Older branch -- primarily professional women

1. Younger branch -- radical activists with ties to civil rights and New Left
2. The Older Branch
3. Galvanized by Presidential Commission on the Status of Women
4. pro-labor/anti-ERA
5. final report (issued 1963) documented:
6. employment discrimination
7. unequal pay
8. lack of social services such as childcare
9. continuing legal inequality
10. led to Equal Pay Act of 1963
11. also led to formation of state-level commissions
12. Inspired by Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique*
13. Title VII of 1964 Civil Rights Act
14. Worked for inclusion of “sex” in phrasing about employment discrimination
15. Civil Rights Act led to formation of EEOC
16. Disappointment over EEOC led to formation of NOW in 1966
17. NOW activists skilled at lobbying, not organizing
18. NOW did not immediately grow into national movement
19. most women still unable to identify with dilemmas of professional women

EFFECTS OF 1964 CIVIL RIGHTS ACT ON BLACK WOMEN’S EMPLOYMENT

**Clerical and Sales Jobs**: **Domestic Service:**

**1960 1970 1960 1970**

**North** 17% 33% 36% 15%

**South** 3% 11%

RESPONSES TO *THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE:*

"In seeking that something "more" out of life, I have tried large does of everything from alcohol to religion, from a frenzy of sports activities to PTA... to every phase of church work... Each served its purpose at the time, but I suddenly realized that none had any real future."

"I 'caught' a husband at 19, married him on my 20th birthday, quit school pregnant, and now have six children! I am the typical stay-at-home, domineering mother and wife. I love my children yet I hate them, have actually wished them dead."