

Megatrends for Women

**Patricia Aburdene
& John Naisbitt**

Authors of *Megatrends* and *Megatrends 2000*

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FIRST EDITION

For Jennifer Jones. Having waited nearly eighteen years, it is your aunt's supreme pleasure to walk into the future with you woman to woman.

Acknowledgments

Sometimes people say, “You must have quite a large staff to do all that research.” No, we answer, we have Joy Van Elderen; she just *does the work of* a large staff. She is our treasure, the researcher other writers can only dream about. She takes mountains of newspaper clippings and other information and transforms them into digestible memos. She knows the Library of Congress like the back of her hand. She can track down just about anyone by phone and interview them or extract that last morsel of information we need to make our case. It is an understatement, but here it is anyway: there is no way we could have written *Megatrends for Women* without Joy.

Linda McLean Harned, who runs our office and itineraries, reviewed both manuscript and galleys, offered many important suggestions and helped with research and fact checking. Her unfailing and wonderfully competent support in many areas of our lives sustained us during the hectic period devoted to this book.

Our agent, the incomparable Ed Victor, played a decisive and early role in the conceptualization of this book. As the project’s godfather, he saw it through every stage of growth. It used to be said, “Behind every successful man is a great woman.” Behind *Megatrends for Women* there is a most supportive man.

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Corinne Kuypers-Denlinger's extensive memo on women's health issues became the substance for the first draft of the Menopause Megatrend chapter. Everett Rogers and Wendy Brooks helped us understand critical mass. Carolyn Long made substantial contributions to the Save the World chapter. Harriett Woods and Steve Schwadron reviewed the politics chapter. Sue Cobb and Donna and Jack Coombs reviewed the sports chapter. Claire Schwadron read the religion chapter. Elizabeth Sherwood, William Ury and Bill Leigh went through the entire manuscript. We are grateful to all of them for thoughtful suggestions and comments and their excitement about the project.

A small team with extensive knowledge about women's issues reviewed the entire manuscript. They were: Frances Lear, Barbara Grogan, Mary Rowe, Riane Eisler, Susan Davis and Carol Anderson Taber. Some made lengthy, detailed suggestions. That these busy, successful people would take the time to read our book could be interpreted as support for our work. It is and we are deeply grateful. But we also know it comes from their passionate caring about women and the challenges and issues before them.

Introduction

This is a book about powerful women transforming an imperfect world.

Megatrends for Women began with a simple question: what trends do women need to know about to be empowered now and in the future?

After sifting through mountains of information, we concluded that women need to know how *other women*, from every walk of life, are shaping social, political and economic trends, and that men, in order to function in today's world, need to know about it, too.

Teachers talk to teachers. The insurance people to other insurance people. The Baptists to Baptists. Leftists to leftists. You know what is going on in your company, church or political party. You rarely get the opportunity to see what is happening elsewhere.

When the subject is women, what is happening is awesome.

Women are transforming the world we live in.

By telling their stories, by describing the trends they are shaping, by showing how they are challenging the most sexist institutions from the medical establishment to organized religion, by offering example after example of women activists, entrepreneurs, politicians, CEOs and athletes, we will make the case that the time for women to embrace their power and set their creativity free has at long last arrived.

Whether you are female or male, the ways that women are changing the world will influence your education, career, marriage, recreation, next business venture, investments, election or advertising campaign.

If you are a woman, you need to know this is *not* the time to hold back; it is the time to go for it.

Megatrends for Men?

This book is addressed only to women—and to men who come in contact with them. So if you are not a husband, boyfriend or father, or if your work or business in no way involves women, then it is safe to say the megatrends women are involved in will not interest you very much. That probably represents about 2 percent of men.

As women and men re-sort out the issues that have divided them, and seek a deeper, more creative level of partnership, men will want and need to know about the trends shaping women's lives, about the new activities women engage in. "Believe me," said one man who read this book in manuscript, "I found it every bit as interesting as any woman would."

Fathers of girls and young women play critical roles in reinforcing their self-esteem, encouraging them to explore and take risks and supporting them in thinking through career and education options. By describing what some of the world's most active and powerful women are doing, this book will help a dad deliver state-of-the-art fatherly advice.

Suppose that after a string of male bosses, your new supervisor is a woman. The trend toward a Women's Leadership style is one you will want to know about to help decide what she expects of you and how to take advantage of possible career-growth opportunities under her watch.

Finally, as a businessman or professional, it is essential to keep up with your female market, population or clients. The business pages are filled with examples—from retailers in bankruptcy to athletic footwear makers whose \$20 million ad campaign flopped—of businesses that ignored, underestimated or misunderstood the importance of a **changing women's market**. For venture capitalists, auto makers, pharmaceutical firms, food producers, advertisers, health-care, computer and electronics firms—to name just a few industries—**hundreds of billions of dollars** are at stake if you are ignorant or lazy

enough to neglect women and the changes they are experiencing and precipitating.

The Quest for Women's Liberation

This book takes women's liberation as a point of departure and asks, What comes next?

That is not to say we think women's liberation has been achieved.

Those men who seek to dominate are not about to "give up" the abuse of power; sexual harassment, sexist institutions and the horrifying violence against women tell us the quest for women's rights will continue for some time.

Male-dominated institutions from the U.S. Senate to the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church will be dragged kicking and screaming into the 21st century. But alongside the dying past they symbolize, a host of new institutions are flourishing:

- The Arizona state legislature, 35 percent female;
- Five-million-plus women-owned businesses that generate more jobs than the Fortune 500;
- India's Self-Employed Women's Association Bank, which makes loans to "questionable risks" and has a 96 percent repayment rate.

Women's liberation has not yet been achieved.

Nevertheless, women in various stages of freedom and autonomy have found the wherewithal within themselves to act, to succeed, to transform. They are doing so from politics to sports to health care. They are bishops and prime ministers, social activists and leaders of the environmental movement, athletes who sometimes triumph over men, anchorpersons, business leaders and professionals and 54 percent of the electorate.

Even though women are not yet fully liberated, they are transforming the different arenas described in this book by building a new reality, a new social order or paradigm that will eventually replace the old order based on the domination of the male sex, its values and power.

Two contradictory realities living together side by side. Some feminists look at the old and say, "See, nothing is changing." In our opinion, that is about the past. This book documents what we see looking at the new paradigm, and it is, we believe, about the future.

Critical Mass

The idea of "critical mass" is very important to this book.

"The notion of 'critical mass' originated in physics, which defined it as the [minimum] amount of radioactive material necessary to produce a nuclear reaction," writes Everett M. Rogers, professor of communication at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, in *The Information Systems Research Challenge: Survey Research Methods*, published by Harvard Business School.

The other key point is once critical mass is reached, the process becomes self-sustaining.

The size of the reaction and when it happens depend on the *concentration and purity* of the radioactive material used and the geometry of the surrounding reaction system.

In other words, it's not just how much new matter is introduced—it is the quality of the input and the environment around it.

"Illustrations of 'critical mass'—situations in which a process becomes self-sustaining after some threshold point has been reached—abound in everyday life," Rogers continues. "It shows up in epidemiology, fashion, survival and extinction of the species, language systems, racial integration, jaywalking, panic behavior and *political movements*" (emphasis added).

Sociologists are also instructed by the idea of critical mass: How many people (what is the critical mass?) are necessary to adopt a new practice, product or belief system before it becomes a chain reaction that in time persuades most people to adopt the practice or product?

What was the critical mass for telephone answering machines? Was it 20 percent? Forty percent?

What was the critical mass for fax machines? What we do know is that it was much less than 50 percent.

In the context of this book, what is the critical mass needed

for women's liberation to become an unstoppable, accepted phenomenon?

Social change happens when critical mass occurs.

One metaphor for critical mass is an avalanche. Tiny snow crystals move, and it looks like nothing at all is happening. Millions become billions, and then there is a *turning point* and boom! A loud explosion.

Critical mass is like a landslide; it is when a trend becomes a megatrend; it is the point when one accepted social paradigm no longer makes sense and is replaced by another.

It is an idea whose time has come.

What was the critical mass of women in the workplace before "family issues" began to be taken seriously? We will raise questions like that throughout this book.

In his landmark book *The Diffusion of Innovations* (The Free Press), Everett Rogers demonstrated that when 13 percent of a population accept a new idea it is only a matter of time before at least 84 percent accept the idea, with time as the unknown. Rogers says that in the sociological context the threshold for critical mass ranges *between 5 and 20 percent*.

"Once the 'critical mass' is achieved the rate of adoption of an innovation becomes self-sustaining," says Rogers.

We believe the critical mass of support among both women and men to achieve all the objectives of the women's movement is already in place.

Critical mass alone is not enough, however. The next challenge is to energize that critical mass and transform it into action. That process, already initiated by millions of women, is what this book describes.

Critical Mass for Democracy

The first modern democracy was set up the United States in 1776. It has been a slow and tumultuous journey of more than 200 years, but most of the countries of the world will become democracies by the year 2000. Once critical mass was achieved in the 1970's, the number of democracies doubled in a single decade.

In 1900 there were only 13 democracies. By 1919, there were 25. The movement toward democracy continued in fits and starts: just after World War II, the count was back to 13. By the 1970's the figure had slowly climbed to 30 or so countries.

Looking back, in the 1970's critical mass appears to have been attained: the number of democratic countries in the world *doubled* in the decade of the 1980's to more than 60. In 1990 for the first time in history, more than 50 percent of the world's people lived in democracies. In the 1990's the fragile democracy in the former Soviet Union can be added. At the end of the decade, once the old men in China pass away, the stage will be set for China to join the ranks of democratic countries—at that point 90 percent of the world's people will live in a democracy.

A Question of Time

When it comes to critical mass, the question is always time. But the women in this book are not willing to wait. They have moved on; they are transforming society *now* because somehow, even though this remains an imperfect world, they have found the strength to act today to change the world or a small part of it.

One way to grossly misunderstand what we are saying here is to conclude, "Aburdene and Naisbitt say the critical mass has been achieved, so there is no further need for the women's movement, for activism, for working to demand equal rights for women. We can all sit back and wait for the avalanche."

No.

Critical mass is a very simple but tricky phenomenon. You can try to predict when it will happen—but you can never be sure until it does. Even though the critical mass is there, no one knows how much time it will take to fully manifest. One thing is certain: the harder we work, the sooner the change occurs.

Sometimes a critical mass is in place, but it needs a spark to set it off. In the South in the '60's the critical mass of people necessary to create the civil rights movement was already there, but it took Rosa Parks's refusal to go to the back of the bus to ignite it. Indeed, it was not even known that a critical mass was present until the spark set it on fire. The civil rights movement had begun—but it certainly did not mark the end of racism.

The Senate hearings for the confirmation of Clarence Thomas

were a similar situation. The all-male lineup of senators presuming to judge conduct that involved women will forever be an icon of the oppressiveness of male domination in government. It was burned into many women's brains and made women more angry than any event in recent memory. Then and there women decided to do something about it. Read about what they did in Chapter 1.

Critical Mass II

When it comes to the women's movement, critical mass cannot be measured simply in terms of opinions and behaviors. Say 40 percent of people believe in women's rights, so what? What are they *doing* about it? That is what this book describes. Not only do a critical mass of men and women embrace women's liberation—that has probably been the case for a decade or more, but a second critical mass of women and like-minded men are acting on that belief to shape society and the institutions within it.

Countervailing Forces

The achievement of critical mass for social change, of course, does not happen in a vacuum. In society, there are usually countervailing forces working against it and slowing down its achievement.

"I hate talking to answering machines." Most of us felt this way, but we got over it.

"How the hell do you pronounce Ms.?" Sort of like "miss, with a z."

This is the small stuff.

When it comes to real social change, the countervailing forces are a lot more powerful. Incumbency. The Supreme Court. A justice system that is still steeped in a legal tradition of male dominance. The male-dominated leadership of the Fortune 500.

These are the kind of countervailing forces women bump up against in attempting to achieve true equality. In sum, the old power structure that does not particularly want to give way. But eventually, once critical mass is achieved, it does give way. Nothing stands in the way of an idea whose time has come.

Admittedly, we are optimists. But we believe that countervailing forces like these are on the verge of becoming *overrun* with an avalanche of support from both women and men to at long last create a

new reality where women and men share power and equality—or at the very least to begin to build it.

Women and Their Power

This book asks: what have women *done* with the freedom and power they possess?

The answer is: a lot. Women are changing every sphere of life. This book addresses those changes chapter by chapter.

After the Clarence Thomas hearings, women, in their anger over sexual harassment, the abortion issue and the cruel insensitivity of their elected officials, were awakened to their political and financial power. Millions and millions of dollars poured into the coffers of women's PACs and campaign funds. In March 1992 came the first **stunning show of political power**: against all the odds, Carol Mosley Braun upset incumbent senator Alan Dixon of Illinois, one of the 11 Democrats to join Republicans to vote for Thomas's confirmation. Next came Democrat Lynn Yeakel's nomination and campaign to defeat GOP Senator Arlen Specter from Pennsylvania. It is only the beginning of a landslide that will see the **first woman president**.

In what has been considered the male arena of **sports**, women dominate most sports and fitness activities. Sports researchers predict women will beat men's times in the 26-mile marathon event by 1998. The 1992 Winter Olympics was the metaphor: U.S. women brought home **all 5 gold medals**—in total, 9 of 11 medals won by Americans.

What are the ten most promising careers and industries for women? Our candidates are listed. The next step for women in business is leadership. Over time women have evolved a successful leadership style that rejects the military model in favor of supporting and empowering people. Male management guru Peter Drucker endorses it—because **it works better** than the old ways. Meanwhile more than 5 million women-owned businesses, the Fortune 500 firms of the 21st century, generate more jobs than the big corporations on that over-esteemed list.

Just as women achieve new heights in business and politics, modern women are fascinated with the mythology of the **“Goddess Reawakening.”** Meanwhile feminist theologians reject the notion that divinity is somehow male and are reinterpreting Scripture to reclaim women's spiritual heritage.

As 40–50 million baby-boom women march toward menopause—and increased **health** risks—women activists are leading a

movement to increase funding for breast-cancer research and expose the risk of heart disease, which kills more women than all cancers combined. Women who have not marched since Vietnam are hitting the pavement, banners in hand.

A new archetype has emerged in the work world: **collaborative couples**—wives and husbands who merge their talents in design and finance, administration and construction to create new family businesses. Their hard work brings the rewards of greater work satisfaction, autonomy, flexibility and multimillion-dollar assets.

In **fashion**, long thought of as a women's area, male designers dictated women's taste top-down for decades, but today the fastest-growing, most successful firms are Liz Claiborne and Donna Karan. A critical mass of working women is compelling the fashion/retail industry to reinvent itself to respond to their needs.

After decades of disruption and divorce, a new era is dawning for the **family**. Studies, surveys and polls all show its members, tired of overwork, want to spend time together. The question is how to make a living, too. That is what families, corporations and government will grapple with as a critical mass of women in the workplace has compelled companies to realize their employees are attached to husbands, wives and children.

As **activists**, environmentalists and new-wave volunteers, women are addressing today's social issues with a fury. It is through women in Third World villages and on inner-city streets that society will confront and solve its most intractable problems. Women have determined that the violence against them must stop and that the perpetrators, with the support of good men everywhere, will be exposed and prevented from harming again.

U.S. women are the first to admire how women the world over are emerging as political leaders. It gives new meaning to the term **New World Order**. Not only is Norway run by a woman, women lead all three Norwegian political parties. From northern Europe, where women are setting the pace as presidents and prime ministers, to stunning advances of women in developing countries from Panama, where the feisty mayor of Panama City hosts a two-hour daily talk radio show, to Myanmar (formerly Burma), where the jailed opposition leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is a woman and recently won the Nobel Peace Prize.

What Comes Next for Women?

Our vision is a positive one.

What women have accomplished is by any standard extraordinary. There is just no way one can look at it and say, “This is all superficial. Deep down women are as oppressed as ever, even more so. The male power structures remain intact—it’s just business as usual. **And it’s never going to change.**”

That is simply not true.

In this imperfect world, where sexism, violence, sexual abuse and harassment are, tragically, still with us, powerful women are planting their feet and making change. This book documents their actions, chapter by chapter, in every sphere of life.

The remnants of male domination—from religious fundamentalism to the U.S. Supreme Court—may well be trying to set women back 200 years or 2,000. They will enjoy small, ill-gotten victories, but they will never succeed for long.

And the reason is critical mass—what it takes to get a movement going and self-sustaining. There are simply too many powerful women with too many male allies (younger men, yes, but older, too).

The balance has finally tipped in women’s favor.

Alongside the decadent abuse of male power another reality grows stronger every day. Millions of women, the world over, are taking economic and political power, building new institutions, infusing them with new, more humanistic values, saving the world or a part of it.

Which Megatrend Is This?

This book is not about women “taking over” and imposing their own brand of oppression on men and other women, *not* a Patriarchy to Matriarchy megatrend. It is about partnership.

Riane Eisler, the author of *The Chalice and the Blade* (Harper & Row; see Chapter 9) describes two basic types of societies—dominator or partnership: “The dominator model is based on ranking, backed by fear or force. It starts at the core of society—the male half of humanity dominating the female.”

If women (or any other wronged party) “seize power,” you can still have the same old domination mode. Look at the “Reign of Terror” in 18th-century France or Mao’s Cultural Revolution in China. But there is another alternative.

“The partnership model is a way to structure human relationships based on *linking*, rather than force or fear,” says Eisler.

“It is not about women taking over, but women and men together expressing their full potential—neither superior or inferior,” Eisler says.

Now *that* is revolutionary.

“If we are ever to have a truly pluralistic society, where people’s differences are freely expressed, celebrated—and utilized for everyone’s benefit, it must begin with a partnership between women and men,” she argues.

One early reader objected to our frequent use of the word “power” or “powerful” to describe women, because she associates the word with force (that certainly has echoes of Eisler’s dominator model). “You mean spirit, or inner strength,” she told us. “Not power.”

But the *Random House Webster’s College Dictionary*’s first definition of power is the “ability to do or act; capability of doing or accomplishing something.” That is the sense in which we use the word, and it certainly describes the women in this book. Spirit and inner strength are frequently the source of their power.

An Attempt at Synthesis

In an age of analysis and specialization, we aspire to “bring it all together,” to create an overview, a synthesis. But we know it is impossible to succeed completely. The subject of virtually every *subhead* within a chapter of *Megatrends for Women* could be a book; some could fill many bookshelves. We have not covered everything. There will be issues you will wish we had discussed—or said more about—and wonderful people we failed to acknowledge. This is a difficult part of being generalists that we have come to live with; we hope our readers can accept it, too.

Turning the Corner

For millennia, women have lived in repression and under male domination. Women have been tortured and raped and treated like cattle. After cycles when women’s lives improved, there was even worse repression. But in the 20th century, the right combination of factors was finally present: critical mass clicked in.