What every marketer should know about women

RENA BARTOS

The Moving Target

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Preface

Now that this book is in print it seems almost inevitable that it should have been written. It is the culmination of a series of professional activities conducted on behalf of my company, J. Walter Thompson, to further our understanding of the changing women's market.

In the early 1970s I was engaged in a series of studies of consumer segments which we labeled "Special Markets." The purpose of the Special Markets Program at Thompson was "to identify the marketing opportunities suggested by life styles or cultural patterns, to study the characteristics that set those groups apart, and to apply this knowledge in specific marketing actions."

Although none of us realized it at the time, the first seeds of this book were sown at a luncheon I gave early in 1973. I had invited a number of professional women at J. Walter Thompson to join me in deciding whether or not working women represented a viable consumer market and whether we should do something about it. This task-force group included media specialists, senior creative women, and account executives.

As a result of our early informal meetings, there was an overwhelming consensus among the group that the working women's market did, in fact, warrant our attention. The first tangible result of our examination was a presentation called "Working Women: The Invisible Consumer Market." As time went on we conducted an in-depth media analysis of the women's market, which compared working women to nonworking women. At that point our study of working women was expanded to include housewives. The concept was re-titled "The Moving Target," because that seemed better to encompass the scope and dynamics of the women's market.

About a year after these activities were begun, a number of working documents had been developed. These included a media analysis, an examination of the buying behavior of working and nonworking women, and a creative review of the imagery of current advertising in a number of product categories.

Another moment which pushed the Moving Target concept closer to book form occurred early in 1974 in a conversation with Ted Wilson

(Edward B. Wilson, former chairman of J. Walter Thompson Company). He suggested that I "put everything you've learned about women in one master document." I was surprised, flattered, and challenged by his suggestion and said that I would try it.

Several months later I brought forth a fairly boring compendium of all the information I had gathered relating to various aspects of the women's market. It was far more like a college term paper than a professional communication from an advertising agency.

I turned to the Creative Department for help and was fortunate that a superb writer named Ellen Currie (who is currently a vice president and associate creative supervisor at J. Walter Thompson) waded through my endless material and synthesized it into what turned out to be the first formal publication on the subject, which we called *The Moving Target*. This brochure was issued by J. Walter Thompson as part of a series of professional communications. I am grateful indeed to Ellen for her sense of clarity, style, and economy of expression. I am also grateful to Carolyne Diehl (currently a vice president and creative director at J. Walter Thompson) for the taste and flair with which she designed and executed the visual aspects of the brochure.

Another moment that might mark the genesis of this book occurred some years later. In the fall of 1976 David Ewing, executive editor for planning of the *Harvard Business Review,* invited me to do an article on the women's market. He said he had heard through the grapevine that I had some interesting ways of segmenting women, and he thought is was high time that the *Harvard Business Review* published something on the subject.

I was very honored at this invitation and accepted it with enthusiasm. One of the conditions, of course, was that anything I submit to them not have appeared elsewhere. It so happened that literally twenty-four hours earlier I had made a commitment to do an article for the *Journal of Marketing*. That article was to deal with the impact of employment on women's consumer behavior. Therefore, the challenge was to develop an article dealing with much the same material but from a totally different perspective.

I completed the *Journal of Marketing* article first and then proceeded to attack the *Harvard Business Review* assignment. I decided to set it in the broader concept of the underlying assumptions that marketers bring to their definitions of target groups. My working title for this article was "The Challenge of Our Assumptions." After an intensive editorial process that occurs when working with the *Harvard*

Business Review, the final title was "What Every Marketer Should Know About Women."

After that article appeared, several publishers expressed interest in having me expand it into a book. Some months later I did decide to undertake this awesome task, and the present volume is the result. Since so much of the content of this book is intertwined with my professional activities on behalf of J. Walter Thompson, there is no way to separate the two. Actually, I would never have made the commitment to write it if I had not been encouraged to do so by the present management of the J. Walter Thompson Company. I am grateful to Don Johnston, chairman and chief executive officer, and Wayne Fickinger, president and chief operating officer, of the J. Walter Thompson Company for their support and encouragement not just in undertaking the development of this manuscript but throughout the implementation of the program of which this book is just one expression.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to a number of people who contributed to this ongoing project over the years. First, the earliest task force consisted of many people who are no longer at J. Walter Thompson and, for that matter, no longer in the industry. I would like to say thank you to my former associates at J. Walter Thompson: Ann Wright, former vice president, media, currently retired; Berta Best, former vice president and associate creative director, currently retired; Susan Procter, currently vice president and creative supervisor, BBDO, Inc.; Joyce LaTerre, vice president, associate media director, Lord, Geller, Federico, Einstein, Inc.; Bette J. McCabe, senior vice president, Hill & Knowlton; Sys Morch, international director of marketing, American Home Products; and Amelia Grinstead, media manager, The Pillsbury Company.

My thanks to my current Thompson colleagues: Ruth Downing Karp, senior vice president and creative director; Jeanne Maraz, vice president and management supervisor; and Catherine Ames, vice president, executive television producer.

In 1978 the original *Moving Target* brochure had gone out of print. We had continuing requests for it and decided that it should be brought up to date rather than reissued. The first brochure was written before the New Demographics concept had been implemented. Therefore, it made good sense to include the new insights provided by the New Demographics concept in the current version of the brochure. My thanks to Lorelle Burke Grazis, currently vice president and creative supervisor, Ted Bates & Company, Inc., for developing the second ver-

sion of the brochure. I am grateful for her creative and editorial skills in bringing that brochure to a successful conclusion. My thanks also to Peter From for the design and implementation of the graphics and visual aspects of *The Moving Target II.*

My thanks to John Bonnell, Nancy Denious, and William Moore for their superb counsel and implementation of all of the graphic materials I use in my public presentations of the Moving Target concept. Many of the illustrations in this book are samples of the superb work done by this team. My particular thanks to Bill Moore for bringing some abstract concepts to life through his perceptive and creative cartoon sketches, such as those included in Chapter 18.

A special note of appreciation to two warm friends and professional colleagues for their creative and aesthetic counsel and guidance throughout the development of all aspects of this program. My thanks to Wilson Seibert, international creative director, for his perceptive and graceful description of the Moving Target on the jacket of this book. Thank you to Bernard Owett, senior vice president and creative director, for his unfailing taste in all aesthetic matters and his generosity in sharing of his time and his talent in counseling on the visual aspects of this book. I am grateful to my former JWT colleague Bob Hungerford, executive vice president and co-creative director of Bradley, Dimmock and Hungerford, for developing the cover graphics which capture the spirit of the Moving Target.

I am grateful to the two professionals who assisted in all of the analysis and technical processing of the data presented in these chapters and the great wealth of data on this subject not included in the present volume. They are Robert Cohen, currently a doctoral candidate in the Sociology Department at Columbia University, who functioned as my assistant during the period from June 1976 to September 1978, and to Dr. Cathy Pullis, who succeeded Bob Cohen in this capacity and has worked with me from August 1978 to the present time. My special thanks to Cathy for her painstaking and patient processing of all the myriad details that go into bringing a text like this to completion. I am most grateful to her for her invaluable assistance. And, finally, many thanks to my superb secretary, Peg Lang, without whose infinite patience, concern, and warm cooperation this project would never have been brought to fruition.

RENA BARTOS
October 1981

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Changing Women

Chapter 1

The Quiet Revolution

There is a simple demographic fact at the heart of a quiet revolution that has affected almost every man, woman, and child in the United States. The ripple effect of that one demographic fact could eventually touch almost every institution in our society and every aspect of our daily lives.

The ultimate shape of the quiet revolution resulting from the surge of women entering the work force is not yet clear to any of us. We are living through a period of accelerating social change. None of us has the perspective of those future social historians who will be able to define the ultimate effects of that change.

Professor Eli Ginzberg, Chairman of the National Commission for Manpower Policy, calls it "the single most outstanding phenomenon of the twentieth century." He agrees that we cannot predict the ultimate consequences of this phenomenon. He goes on to say that the secondary and tertiary consequences of "that outstanding phenomenon" are really unchartable.

The eminent sociologist David Reisman says it is not a single phenomenon at all but a multiple series of parallel phenomena. He calls the changes that have occurred in women's lives "the women's movements" rather than "the women's movement." Professor Reisman says: "I regard the women's movements—and I insist on the plural—as the most important of my time. And it's not true, as some say, that they're over. They have become so much the fabric of the country that one no longer thinks of them as a movement."[1]

The dramatic rise in the number of women in the work force is one of the more obvious changes that has occurred. It is this phenomenon that I term "the quiet revolution." But it would be too narrow and simplistic a view to assume that the unprecedented flood of women into the work force in recent years is the only real change that has taken place. The dramatic increase in the number of working women is one symptom of a more fundamental change in women's self-perceptions.

Traditionally women have been identified in terms of derived status. Their lives were defined in terms of whose daughter they were and whom they married. It is only in recent years that even the happiest of wives and mothers has also yearned for a sense of self-identity that goes beyond her family role. This is one of the strong motivators that has drawn some women into the work force, other women into the pursuit of mid-life education, and still others into encouraging their daughters to seek goals different from the ones they themselves held in their formative years.

A dramatic example of this change is found in the contrast between Margaret Trudeau and the wife of Joe Clark, the recent Prime Minister of Canada. Mrs. Clark, a lawyer and the mother of a small daughter, prefers to retain her maiden name. She and her husband appear to have a close marriage based on partnership and mutual respect.

Contrast this with Margaret Trudeau, whose courtship and marriage to Pierre Trudeau was in true fairy tale tradition—the beautiful, obscure young girl courted by the famous, attractive, dashing statesman. After a whirlwind courtship she married her Prince Charming, moved into the residence of the Prime Minister, and raised a family. The headlines have reminded us that she did not live happily ever after. Ironically, even in her current separation from Trudeau, her identity is defined only in terms of her former relationship to him. Without it, no one would be interested in whether or not this unknown young woman danced at Studio 54 or not. This is a classic example of derived status.

So many changes have occurred in women's lives in the last decade that it is difficult to remember the way we were only a few years ago. The forces that were unleashed in the last few years will continue into the 1980s and beyond. Someone has said, rather inelegantly, that once you squeeze the toothpaste out of the tube it can't be put back. That describes what has happened with women's self-perceptions and aspirations. There is no turning back.

The flood of change has touched the lives of almost every woman in this country to some extent. The changes have not affected all of us in the same way. We are not all at the same stage of the life cycle, and we are not all cut out by the same cookie cutter. The women in our country are wonderfully diverse.

Two major attitudinal changes in public opinion that have occurred are revolutionary in relation to the values with which many of us grew up. Nine out of ten people in this country think it is perfectly all right for a couple to decide not to bring children into this world if they don't care to. And more than half of the people in this country think it

is all right for a man and woman to live together without marriage if they care for each other.[2] This means that young women today have many more options than women thought they had in the past. It is not always easy to tread an uncharted path.

Some fundamentals do not change. Marriage and family life will continue, but the context may be different. Whether the young women of today marry at all or marry later, I think many of them will marry. Their reasons may be different from those of yesterday's brides. They will marry not because it is expected of them, nor to snag a meal ticket, and not because it is the only option available to them. If they do marry, it will probably be because they really want to join their lives with those of the men that they marry. I think there will be more of a spirit of sharing and partnership and more openness in marriage.

There could be new areas of conflict, particularly in homes where both husbands and wives are pursuing serious careers. In some cases this could lead to weekend marriages. While that is not an appealing thought to the traditional-minded, we should remember that many very traditional marriages are also weekend marriages to all intents and purposes. Think of all the wives alone in the suburbs coping with the responsibilities of housekeeping and bringing up children while their husbands are off on business trips. Perhaps a marriage where each partner has a sense of accomplishment during the time of separation can lead to a greater appreciation of the other in the times when they are together.

While there is no doubt that many of the wives flooding into the work force are propelled by economic motivations, it cannot be economics alone that is keeping many of them there. We might contrast the present situation with the Depression years of the 1930s. In those days if wives worked, it was because their husbands were unemployed and they went to work temporarily to help cope with an emergency situation. It was the norm in those days for the husband to support his wife and for the wife to keep the home fires burning.

Of course, we have always had some women seeking professional careers even though their husbands could support them. But a generation ago those women were swimming against the tide. Eyebrows were raised. It was assumed that perhaps their husbands were not able to support them or that something was wrong with their marriages. Such women paid their dues in order to pursue careers by becoming "supermoms." They tried to prove to their friends and neighbors that they could do it all and do it superbly. They had the best-kept homes and the best-raised children, and they served superb gourmet dinners. They

and their husbands assumed that the home was solely the responsibility of the wife. If she chose to work outside the home, she took on a second job.

Currently the situation has flip-flopped. These days wives of some of the most affluent, achieving men are distinctly uncomfortable in social situations when someone asks them: "And what do you do?"

One of the other key factors in the change is the close link between education and women's presence in the work force. The more education a woman has the more likely she is to be at work. Conversely, women at the lowest educational level, whom one might assume are in the greatest financial need, are least likely to be working.

In the past few years most of the Ivy League colleges have opened their doors to women. Every year the ratio of men to women in those colleges comes closer to equality. A generation ago only about three out of every ten college students were women, while today as many women as men are enrolled in colleges and universities. In the past few years there has been an enormous acceleration in the number of women seeking advanced training in professions that were normally considered male bastions: medicine, law, architecture, engineering. The ratios of women to men are far from equal in these graduate schools, but the proportion is growing every year.

Another element in this complex mix is the fact that our population is living a greater number of years, and people are far more vigorous at those advanced ages than in previous generations. In the days when women defined their roles as wives and mothers, they tended to raise larger families and did not have very many years left after that biological function had been fulfilled. Today, with small families, the child-raising years are a relatively short interlude in a woman's life span. Therefore, the energy of many middle-aged women needs outlets beyond the traditional nurturing role.

In the past such women turned to volunteer work, which is still, of course, an important outlet for many women in our society. But, increasingly, middle-aged women are seeking to renew old skills or develop new ones and find second careers for themselves in the world of work.

In addition, women in our society tend to outlive men. Since most women marry men somewhat older than themselves, we are left with more widows than widowers. Even if these widows have lived in the most traditional life style, when widowhood comes their children are grown and out of the nest, and they are, in effect, suddenly unemployed.

The changes that are manifested in so many aspects of life interact with each other, so it is difficult to separate cause and effect. Many of the attitudinal and behavioral changes that have occurred in the homes of working women spill over into the households of traditional-minded housewives. Even the most traditional housewives want to share in the family decision-making process. They want to have a greater voice in how the family spends its money.

The pendulum has swung so that all of us, full-time housewives and working women alike, are more casual in the way we keep house, the way we entertain, and the way we interact with our families. As these changes have happened, many of the old stereotypes are giving way. American women are no longer depicted as the dominating, silver-cord mothers castigated by Philip Wylie or the obsessive housewife like the heroine of *Craig's Wife,* whose emphasis on perfection left no room for humanity in her beautifully kept house.

The symptoms of change that I have described are not manifest to exactly the same degree in every household in America. However, they reflect a fundamental change in women's lives. My prediction is that these changes will not go away.

In the following pages I shall document the most obvious manifestation of change, the increased presence of women in the work force.

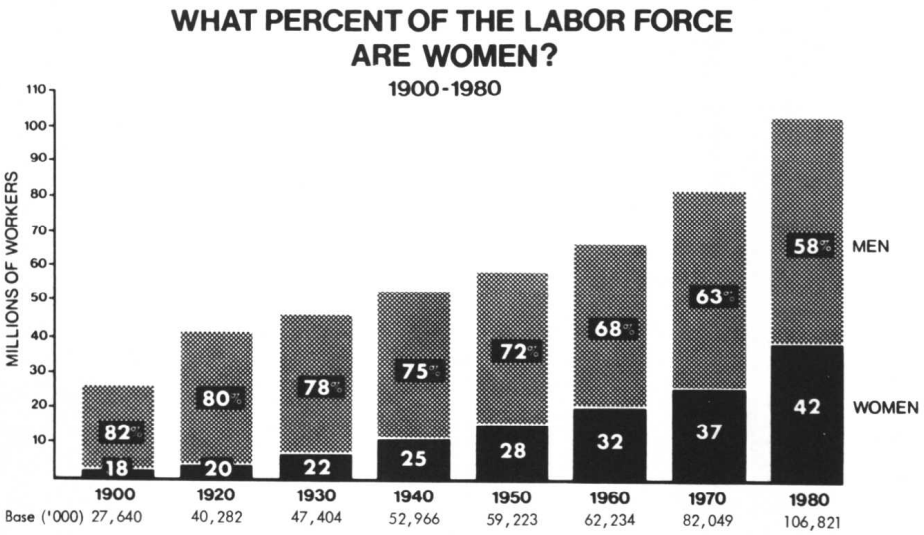
When Did It Start?

There have always been women at work in our country. However, historically they were a rather minor factor in the labor force. At the turn of the century 18 percent of all workers in our country were females. By 1940 they had inched up to a level of 25 percent participation. The pace began picking up in the gray flannel 1950s. It accelerated in the 1960s and reached a crescendo in the 1970s. By 1980 the number of women in the labor force had not equaled that of men. However, they were fast approaching equality in numbers, if not in rewards. In 1980 42 percent of all workers in our country were women.

So far we have been considering the proportion of workers in our country who are women. Another way to look at this revolutionary demographic fact is to consider the proportion of women in our country who are workers.

Even at the turn of the century some women were working women. Back in 1900 one out of every five women in the United States was in the work force. If this number is modest, it is also somewhat startling.

EXHIBIT I



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics

It challenges the assumption that many of us had that prior to World War I women were totally home-oriented and never ventured out into the world of work.

The reality is that by 1920 just under one in four American women were at work, and by the 1940s just over one in four were in the work force.

This historical review, which charts the change at ten-year intervals, does not reflect the explosion that occurred during World War II. In the period from 1942 to 1945, more than 6 million women joined the labor force to serve the needs of a highly mechanized wartime economy, crossing almost every traditional male job boundary.[3]

As the historian William Chafe describes it, "women ran lathes, cut dies, read blueprints, and serviced airplanes. They maintained roadbeds, greased locomotives, and took the place of lumberjacks in toppling giant redwoods. As stevedores, blacksmiths, foundry helpers, and drill press operators, they demonstrated that they could fill any job, no matter how difficult or arduous."[4]

Things were never quite the same again. True, when the war was over, women welcomed their heroes back with an enthusiastic return to domesticity. Returning veterans bought their share of the American dream in an uprecedented flight to the suburbs.

The women's magazines extolled the glories of "togetherness."

They were full of tips on cooking, sewing, home decorating, and all the domestic arts. Large families became the ideal. The baby boom was under way.

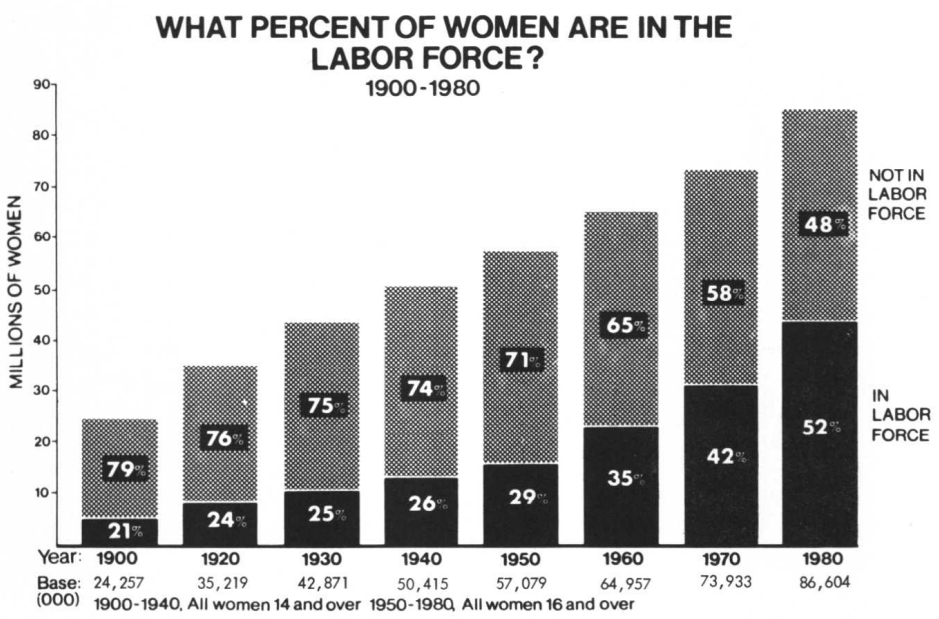
In spite of the intense emphasis on hearth and home, there was a sharper rise in the percentage of women in the work force from 1940 to 1950 than had occurred in any previous decade since the beginning of the century. But this was only a preliminary to the main event.

From 1950 to the present, at every ten-year interval, the percentage of women in the labor force surged ahead at a steady increase of 20 to 21 percent. By 1980 more than half of all women in the United States sixteen and older were going to work.

But not all nonworking women are housewives. Even as we consider the fact that 52 percent of all women were in the work force at the end of 1980, we must realize that this simple statement of fact is an understatement. By basing our analyses on all women in our country sixteen and over, the universe includes women who are too young or too old to be actively involved in the world of work. This is illustrated dramatically by the occupational profile of all women aged sixteen and over in the United States in 1980.

This explodes the common assumption that if a women isn't in the

EXHIBIT II



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics