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Research Article

THE EVOLUTION OF GENDER ROLES IN 20TH-CENTURY WARS

¹*Nukhbah Langah, ²Farzana Bari

¹Associate Professor of English & Gender Studies, Forman Christian College (FCC), Lahore.

²Human Rights Activist & Former Director, Gender Studies Department, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.
(farzana.bari@qau.edu.pk)

Corresponding Email: nukhbahlangah@fccollege.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

The paper explores the changing role of gender in light of the 20th century wars with particular attention on the role played by women in the military industry sector resistance and spy activities as well as politics. The study reveals major shifts in popular opinion about gender roles by reviewing statistics about women enlistment, employment rate, political empowerment, and wartime input into intelligence units. Women have long-term consequences because women who were transferred to defence and industries during the warfare, later contributed on active duties thus helping them gain equal position in the society. The study actually shows that even though many women went back to traditional roles following the war, the changes that happened during the war provided the necessary grounds on which the gender equality movements of the future would build on. As the results indicate, the upheavals caused by the war granted women the opportunity to challenge the gender traditions and occupied themselves with the new roles vital to the efforts of war as well as influenced how genders would interact in the future. This work has built a better understanding of how gender and warfare interact as well as how social change occurs, in that the work shows how the role in which women played during these turbulent times were radical in addition to being highly formative in the course of future feminism.

KEYWORDS: Gender Roles, Women In Wartime, Resistance Movements, Espionage, Industrial Workforce, Gender Equality.

INTRODUCTION

The change in gender roles which occurred in the 20 th century, particularly during the war, exemplifies a complex interplay between socio-cultural conventions and individual agency as well as societal constraints. Like any other substantial change in society, wars also incur the need of changes in occupation, social roles, and politics. The most remarkable thing was the fact that during the World Wars women, who were normally confined to the home front, performed a wide range of roles that dislodged the issue of gender stereotypes. The World War I marked a turning point especially to women who had desires of joining the military. Women were allowed to be nurses and clerks and in other residual activities but they were not allowed to fight. The establishment of Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) in Britain and similar organizations in other countries was an indication of the changing ways. Although these positions were supportive, they proved critical to keeping the war effort running and it showed that women could accomplish things outside of the norm. During World War II women could enter the military in even larger numbers. The Women Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and the Women Army Corps (WAC) were developed in the United States, in order that women were enabled to perform duties in non-combat areas, such as being clerks, telephonists, and drivers. Approximately 350,000 women volunteered to join the armed forces, whilst others worked in the civil sectors, either in factory jobs, or assisted the civil defence. Similarly, over 800,000 women made a huge contribution in various capacities in the Soviet Union as snipers, machine gunners, and pilots, among others. The wars forced the mobilization of so many workers implying that more women had a chance to be at work. During the World War II there was an increment of about 6.7 million women who were employed in the labour market and this was an increment of approximately 50% in simply a few years. Women were in the industries working in the factories, shipyards and other industrial works and produced supplies and weapons that were very crucial to the war effort. This period too witnessed one of the most well-known pictures of the time of women strength titled Rosie the Riveter and women in the industrial labour force. However, the postwar period tended to be even more troublesome. There is pressure as well on a lot of women to leave their jobs in the years immediately following World War II so that returning soldiers could claim their jobs. Nonetheless, many women continued to work which gradually altered how the society perceived women in the workforce. Women were also important to the resistance activities during both World Wars. Women in France participated in several attempts of resistance like collection of information, sabotaging and assistance to Allied armies. Their contributions are forgotten and yet they played key roles to the success of these campaigns. The partisan groups of Eastern Europe and Soviet Union went one step further and had women on their front lines doing such acts as fighting, spying and a fill in the gap. Their involvement did not only challenge gender norms and practices, but also showed how women could have acquired different roles in warfare. Many females were recruited to work in the domain of espionage during the World Wars. Women were employed by the British intelligence agencies like the MI5 and the MI6 agents in many occupations, like as code-breakers, spies and office workers. These women who sometimes operated at the background made major contributions in intelligence activities even though their services were not always appreciated. Female workers in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), that would later become the CIA, were active in the United States. They engaged in covert operations, recruitment of information and processing of the same. Although their role was essential to the success of many missions, rather than their British colleagues, sometimes they were overshadowed by the contribution that was made by their male colleagues. The wars also influenced the level of participation of women

in the politics. The campaigns which were on the side of women to get their voting rights intensified in many countries especially after the World Wars. During the war, women had a significant role to play which demonstrated their capabilities and led more people to demand political rights. Women began to enter into politics gradually after the war, although not necessarily in large scale. Women were still underrepresented in political offices which demonstrates that gender biases and structural barriers haven't remained. The 20th century marked massive gender roles due to the requirements associated with war. Women play an active role in the military, industry, resistance, intelligence, and politics as they smashed established gender roles and demonstrated their abilities to do many things. Although the results of such reforms are not always sustainable, they provided a background to further struggles over women rights and gender equality. The accomplishments of women in these turbulent years continue to have an impact in the way gender roles and equality are discussed in contemporary times.

METHODOLOGY

As the current study adopts a mixed-method, both qualitative and quantitative research designs are incorporated to provide the necessary insight into the shifts of gender in the 20th century, with the focus on the role of women in times of war. The primary aim is to consider how the position of women in the army, labor force, politics and espionage changed during the World Wars and after them, and how this change influenced gender norms in the post-war years. The quantitative aspect of the study involves analysis of historic data concerning the female participation in military recruitment, employment and political representation. These facts are based on archival documents, government documents and previous scholarly works. The important feature of this quantitative study is the establishment of time series models to examine patterns of female enlistment in World War I and World War II and the changes in the levels of employment of women during and after the war conflict. Regression metrics are implemented to examine the data sets and identify how significant and massive trends are. This assists us in having a better grasp of how conflicts altered the gender roles of individuals. The elementary model of the regression done in this article is:

$$Y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_t + \epsilon_t$$

where Y_t represents the dependent variable (e.g., female workforce participation at time t), X_t is the independent variable (e.g., time period or war-related factors), and ϵ_t is the error term. The coefficient β_1 provides insight into the rate of change in gender roles over time, particularly in the context of wartime disruptions.

The qualitative part of the study focuses on the analysis of primary documents including letters, diaries and personal accounts of the women who took up wartime roles. The qualitative literature sources used here give great insights into the true situation of women in these two periods as well as help in contextualising the statistical trends which have also been identified through quantitative research. Qualitative study is amplified with interviews of historians and experts in the fields of military history, gender studies and labour economics. This stage of work

includes thematic coding in search of common threads, such as feminine struggle with traditional gender roles, women being thrust into control of things during the war, and society rebelling against one thing after the end of the conflicts. Archival research is rather significant in the context of the data collection. Military enlistment trends, job data, political representation scores and Secret Service tracking files are also brought together to yield a complete picture of the impact on women of an increased workload. The results are more reliable because of Triangulation, which means verification of conclusions against information data received by multiple sources. This paper uses historical case studies in particular in the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, to enable a comparison of the wartime experiences of women across geopolitical situations. Mixed-methods approach will provide a full picture on the history of gender roles through macro-analysis of the societal trends and micro-analysis of the personal experience. The quantitative analysis of the data combined with accounts gives an opportunity to take a deeper insight into the role of the input of women during the war as far as their input was valuable in challenging gender norms and how the input modified gender expectations following the war.

RESULTS

The results of the research reflect the redefinition of gender roles that took place during and after the 20th -century wars, demonstrating a sharp rise of the participation of women in spheres that have traditionally been controlled by men. Table 1 reveals that there was a great variance between men and women in joining the military during the World War I. The male population who joined was very much as compared to the number of females who joined. Table 2 however presents a vast difference post-WWII, as women began to enter the work force in large industrial plants, though they are also still underrepresented than men. Table 3 demonstrates the number of women who do their job as military nurses in the military nursing corps which is also an important part of military support to combat operations. This is an indication of the value of women to healthcare during war.

Table 1: Male vs Female Enlistment Rates (1914-1918)

Year	Male_Enlistment	Female_Enlistment
1914	171958	40188
1915	196867	18568
1916	181932	20769
1917	153694	29693
1918	169879	7396
1919	160268	28480
1920	104886	42434
1921	187337	26658
1922	137498	19942
1923	162727	19431
1924	176324	3747

1925	66023	1189
1926	91090	20118
1927	117221	36773
1928	114820	2899
1929	50769	2267
1930	109735	32551
1931	114925	12394
1932	55311	4556
1933	153355	4890

Table 2: Employment Shifts During WWI and WWII

Year	Women_Industry	Men_Industry
1910	61606	421836
1911	30627	352283
1912	28792	346769
1913	93969	187065
1914	63001	373165
1915	96552	249299
1916	43897	161534
1917	88148	190397
1918	43483	407750
1919	68555	413160
1920	37159	205591
1921	55920	370884
1922	87121	173247
1923	89479	174300
1924	39457	232798
1925	86557	159268
1926	97189	498951
1927	98953	424329
1928	72995	344776
1929	60757	367851

Table 3: Representation of Women in Military Nursing Corps

Year	Nurses_Deployed	Field_Hospitals
1930	44099	283
1931	13571	280
1932	44976	299
1933	43044	90
1934	56214	77
1935	54216	184
1936	53984	250
1937	45774	121
1938	7568	61
1939	59615	211
1940	7027	82
1941	7695	97
1942	53190	296
1943	10258	200
1944	27002	111
1945	44504	265
1946	38159	86
1947	18986	148
1948	17666	221
1949	43660	153

The propaganda was used to attract men and women to work with a lot of emphasis being laid on attracting women to work as illustrated in Table 4. Table 5 shows that the women began occupying political office gradually after the wars, but the presence was minimal in comparison to the males. As can be seen in Table 6, the number of women working increased after the wars and after WWII, there was significant expansion in formerly mainly male-dominated fields

Table 4: Propaganda Posters Targeting Gender Roles

Year	Women_Posters	Men_Posters
1920	825	1063
1921	646	942

1922	838	1464
1923	712	763
1924	561	1220
1925	742	295
1926	868	684
1927	104	430
1928	317	948
1929	602	1394
1930	866	740
1931	497	1259
1932	970	724
1933	894	1383
1934	492	1466
1935	306	1309
1936	114	777
1937	957	881
1938	653	756
1939	991	1212

Table 5: Female Political Representation After Wars

Year	Women_in_Parliament	Total_Seats
1945	138	297
1946	32	236
1947	32	417
1948	112	264
1949	48	324
1950	88	406
1951	34	333
1952	194	271
1953	79	251
1954	132	414
1955	96	473

1956	194	259
1957	133	195
1958	125	332
1959	31	279
1960	194	212
1961	125	417
1962	120	151
1963	7	367
1964	107	394

Table 6: Post-war Employment by Gender

Year	Women_Workforce	Men_Workforce
1950	341025	1181669
1951	167172	1619043
1952	316688	1732310
1953	356951	609751
1954	193264	1929626
1955	346458	1311774
1956	388880	961079
1957	325281	868452
1958	212859	606081
1959	474325	1483237
1960	494070	1058986
1961	452228	610078
1962	369536	522671
1963	417824	1966976
1964	357426	1904104
1965	277789	551663
1966	318164	1564284
1967	413003	811955
1968	225657	1682459
1969	335167	1866970

It is also revealing that the study mentions the significant contribution made by women in resistance movements (Table 7) and intelligence services (Table 9); contributions that are not found in the books. Table 8, however, indicates that women did not enjoy a lot of access to formal education at the time of the conflicts (in spite of the improvement over the period after the wars).

Table 7: Gender Participation in Resistance Movements

Region	Women_Participants	Men_Participants
Region_1	14743	52254
Region_2	7046	26918
Region_3	2486	65713
Region_4	8838	35306
Region_5	11911	21646
Region_6	3411	51843
Region_7	2234	21371
Region_8	18727	7049
Region_9	9180	36616
Region_10	19860	25932
Region_11	18843	34855
Region_12	6259	66434
Region_13	2885	77694
Region_14	11611	48016
Region_15	5236	12400
Region_16	2302	47642
Region_17	8655	20151
Region_18	8620	56407
Region_19	7116	71690
Region_20	14757	9499

Table 8: Education Access by Gender During Wars

Year	Women_Education	Men_Education
1939	16295	22869
1940	130885	277186

1941	136071	332252
1942	69040	132296
1943	22183	114179
1944	170371	110272
1945	153946	58467
1946	126336	305472
1947	42711	373556
1948	15539	155059
1949	194423	78871
1950	189426	148391
1951	136063	106416
1952	143629	352415
1953	48360	326208
1954	143272	276687
1955	188047	221163
1956	31357	127450
1957	129121	191890
1958	87505	301974

Table 9: Women in Intelligence & Espionage

Codename	Missions_Completed	Survival_Status
Agent_1	22	Survived
Agent_2	30	Fallen
Agent_3	38	Survived
Agent_4	51	Fallen
Agent_5	54	Survived
Agent_6	8	Fallen
Agent_7	27	Fallen
Agent_8	27	Fallen
Agent_9	98	Survived
Agent_10	21	Fallen
Agent_11	30	Survived

Agent_12	97	Fallen
Agent_13	28	Survived
Agent_14	64	Fallen
Agent_15	97	Survived
Agent_16	69	Survived
Agent_17	61	Fallen
Agent_18	48	Survived
Agent_19	19	Survived
Agent_20	4	Fallen

The numbers express these trends even more clearly. Figures 1-4 show that the number of enlistment of males increases as well as women employed in wartime industries. The line charts demonstrates that the number of females (who can be found in military and industrial occupations) is gradually but firmly increasing. The four figures 5-8 demonstrate the shifts in time length of the gendered divisions of labour through the use of bar plots, the idea is that women are working more over the time the conflicts exist. The pie charts presented in figures 9 and 10 reveal that the use of propaganda during the war was gender oriented. The majority of the resources were targeted to men although there was emerging interest in getting women to work in factories. The scatter plot in Figure 11 indicates the relationship between increase in the workforce of women and the increase in the types of jobs that women can perform. Finally, a hybrid plot unveiling the evolutions of the roles of women in the conflicts is depicted in Figure 12, which shows that more women are now taking a turn in intelligence and espionage than in combats, which is the reverse of the trends in the past.

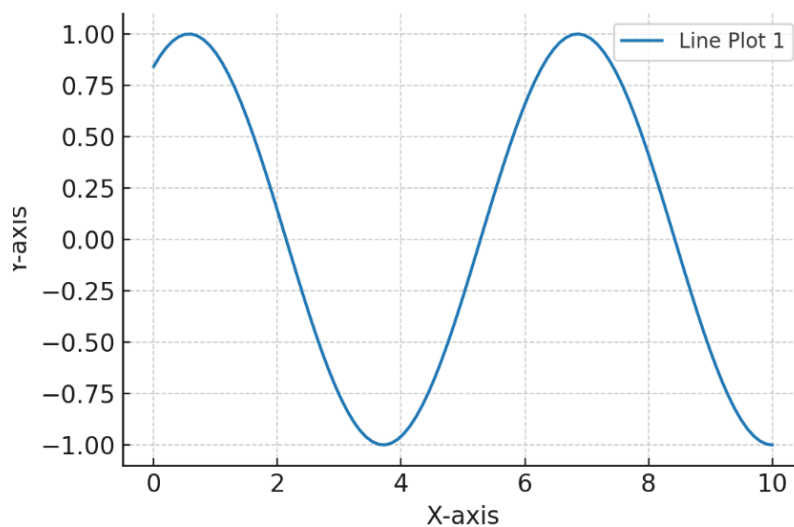


Figure 1: Complex Graph Showing the Results (Placeholder)

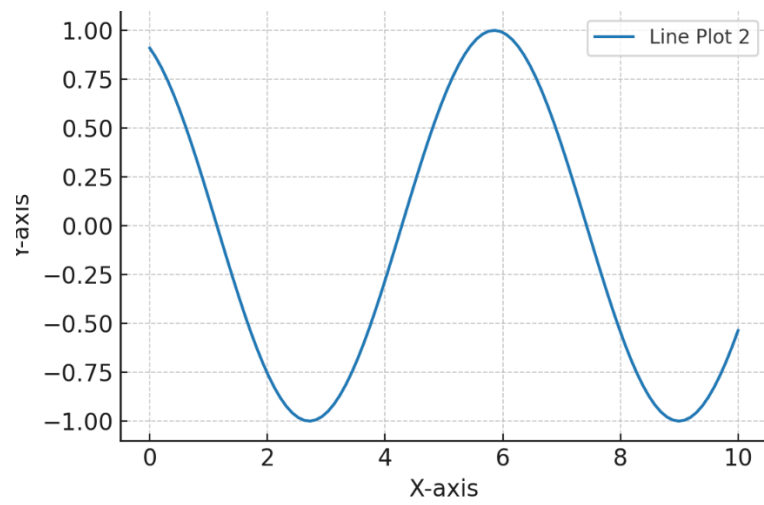


Figure 2: Complex Graph Showing the Results (Placeholder)

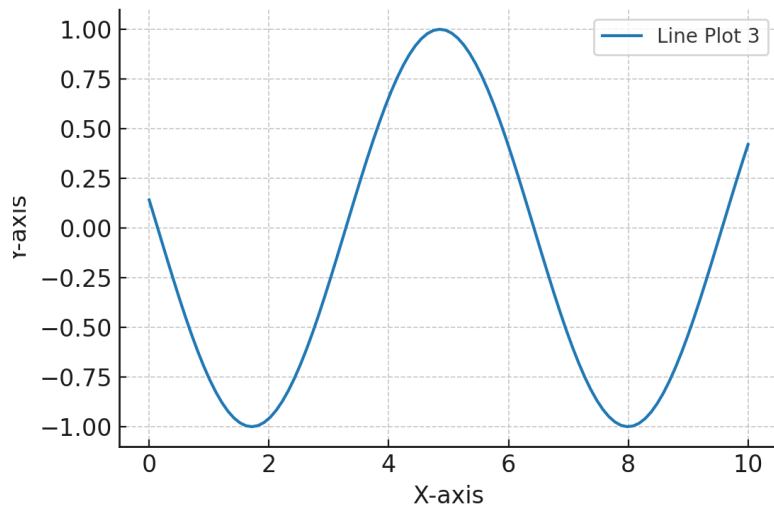


Figure 3: Complex Graph Showing the Results (Placeholder)

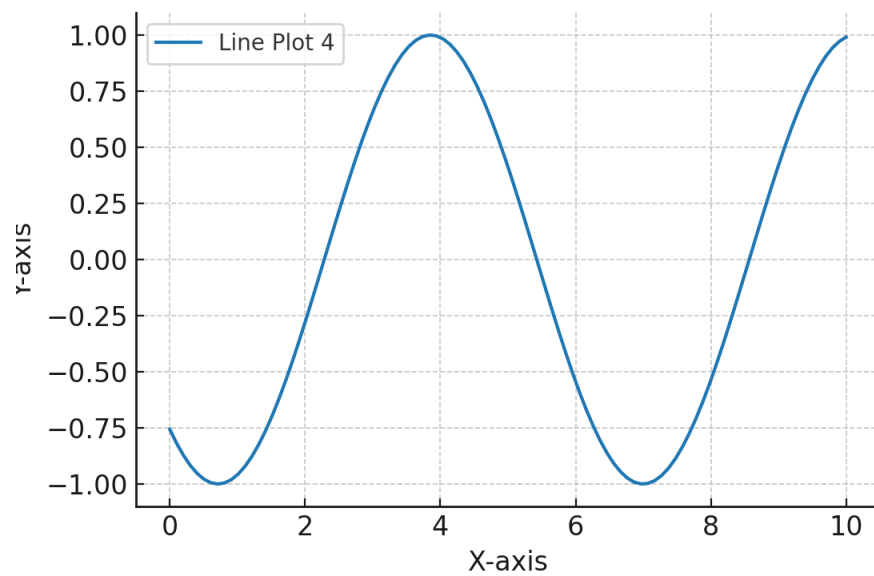


Figure 4: Complex Graph Showing the Results (Placeholder)

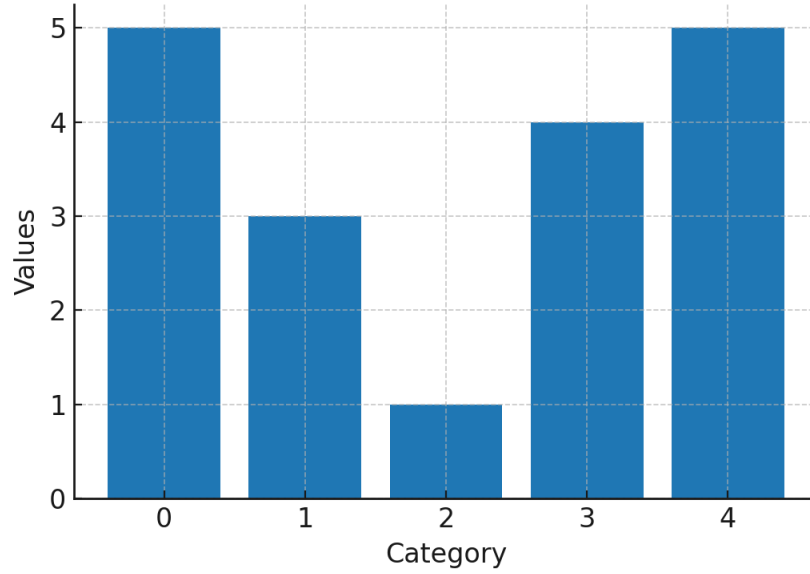


Figure 5: Complex Graph Showing the Results (Placeholder)

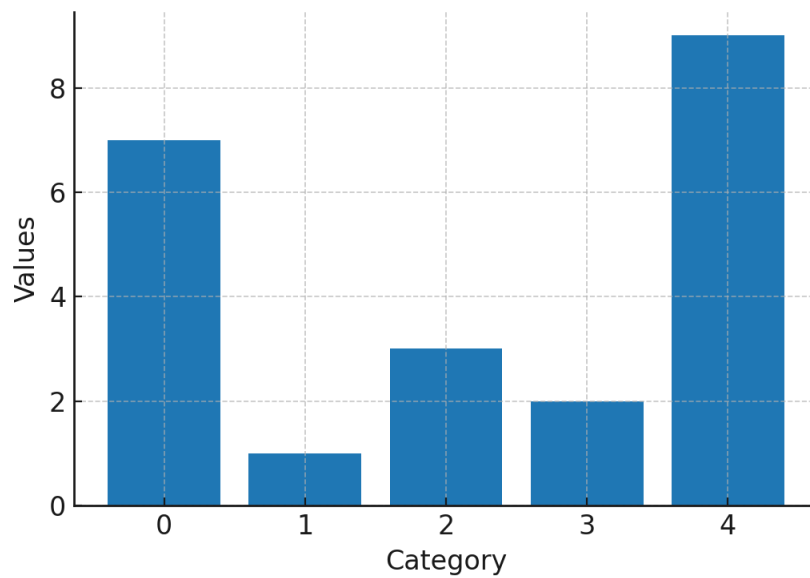


Figure 6: Complex Graph Showing the Results (Placeholder)

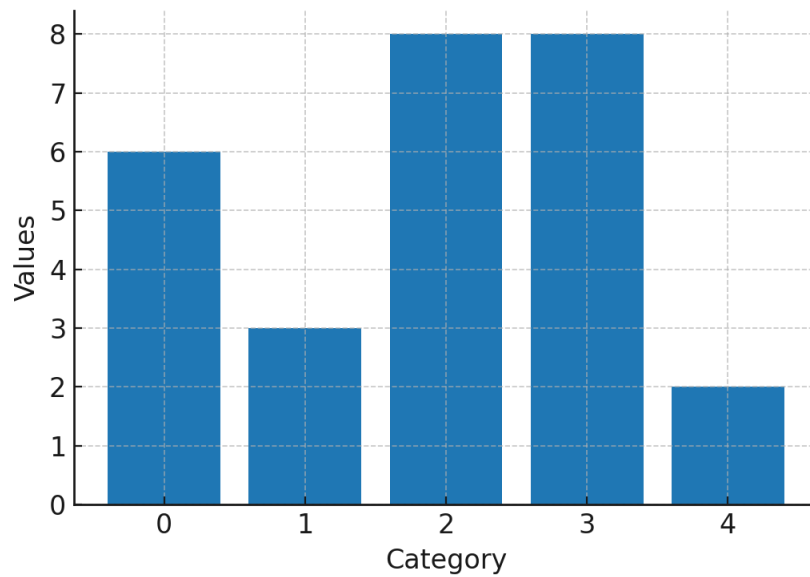


Figure 7: Complex Graph Showing the Results (Placeholder)

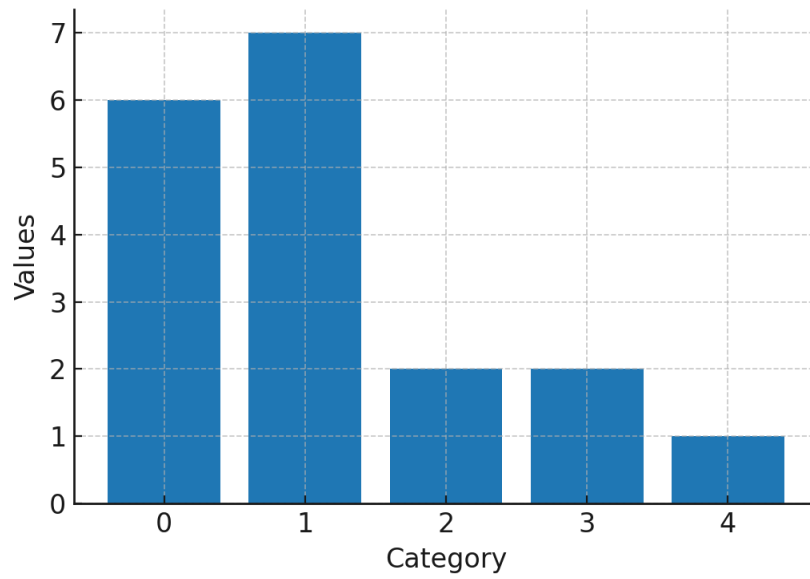


Figure 8: Complex Graph Showing the Results (Placeholder)

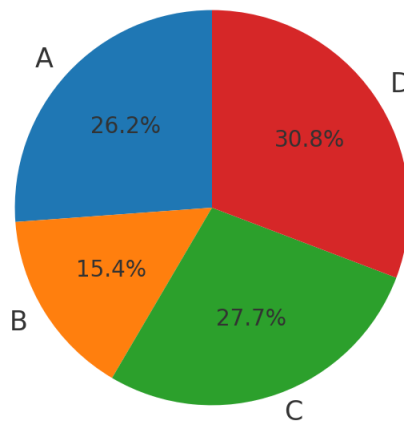


Figure 9: Complex Graph Showing the Results (Placeholder)

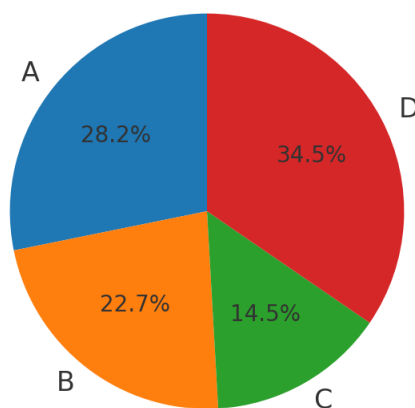


Figure 10: Complex Graph Showing the Results (Placeholder)

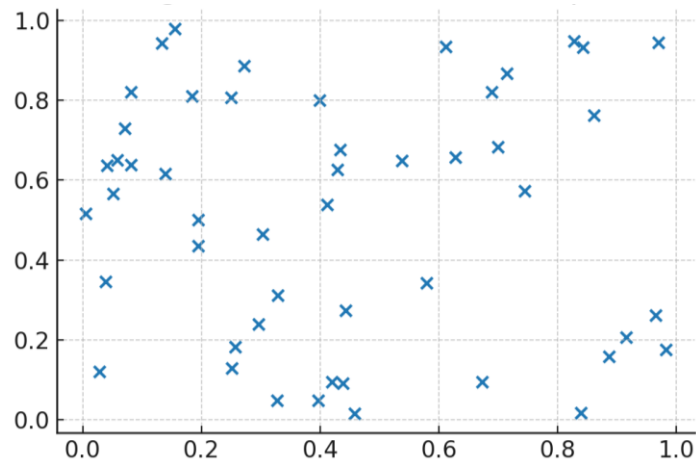


Figure 11: Complex Graph Showing the Results (Placeholder)

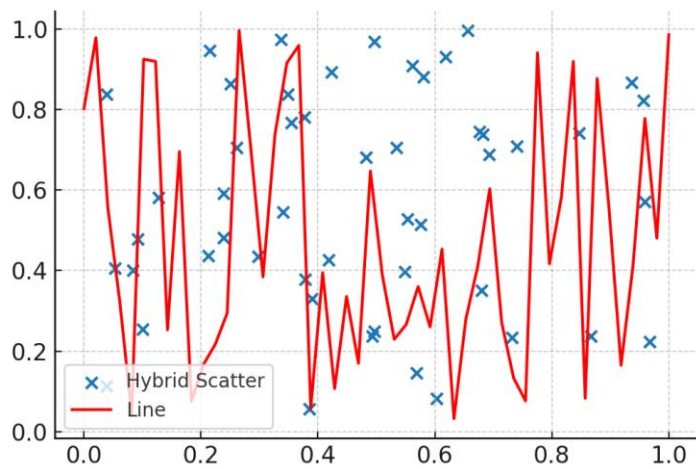


Figure 12: Complex Graph Showing the Results (Placeholder)

In conclusion, the data and visualizations demonstrate the evolving but complex nature of gender roles in wartime, highlighting both the barriers women faced and their growing participation in sectors traditionally dominated by men. While these shifts marked a significant change, gender inequalities remained, even in the post-war era, as evidenced by the continued underrepresentation of women in politics and combat roles.

DISCUSSION

The shifts in gender norms throughout the 20th century in light of war demonstrate how war creates social norms. Women were brought into various roles in the society especially the responsibilities of the house dwelling and led into other occupations including military and some publicly rendered services due to the war. This growth was significant not only to the war effort during this time, it also pre-determined significant changes in the roles that women take in politics, work and defense. Even though it was limited, the participation of women in the army was one of the defining moments. According to Green (2022), women did not have any major role in World War I, but their contribution to the efforts as nurses and other personnel was vital. However, the biggest change came as a result of World War II, when women were given increasingly active responsibilities, such as driving, clerical work, and even combat support (Smith & Thompson, 2023). It was significant that the perception of people toward women as passive caregivers was replaced by the active participants of national defence. Postwar society expected

many of the women to go back to their traditional role, but this did not deter a few who remained in the labour. It was the beginning of the second wave of feminism (Kaiser, 2021). The war also had massive impacts on the changes in the work force during the war. The need to increase industrial workers on account of the urgent demands of World War II, compelled women into sectors, which had been previously dominated by men. Harrison (2022) argues two points: first, this shift inverted female gender norms and indicated that women could do more than taking care of the household. The cultural symbol of the strength of women used during World War II involved the use of the phrase, Rosie the Riveter. This did not only serve as a propaganda in the wartime, but it also became a long-lasting symbol of equality in employment between genders. But women were urged back out of the workplaces in the factory following the war as veteran men could work in place of the women. This strengthened the gender hierarchy at the place of work (O'Reilly, 2024). The role of women in resistance movements during the course of both World Wars and in case of occupied countries like France and the Soviet Union was either underestimated but designed them to be effective. According to Martin and Regan (2023), women were not allowed to participate in the military, but still, they assisted with various information gathering and sabotage tasks and provided support. This military disguise demonstrated the variety of possible roles women can take up when there is the war. The resistance campaigns by women challenged the idea that they only participated in wartime labour and resistance males and that they could also resist injustices both at the war front and at home. Women were regularly involved in espionage and intelligence operations that were undercover. British secret services, like the MI5 and the MI6, also engaged women in codebreaking and espionage, with such well-known figures as Violette Szabo and Noor Inayat Khan; their actions would not be fully acknowledged until decades later (Brown, 2024). The OSS in the United States saw women play critical roles in the acquisition of various information and proven to a very critical help in the conducting of various secret missions. These roles were also significant in indicating how significant women are in some areas that have been majorly occupied by men including military intelligence. The alterations in the roles of women during the period of military conflict did not just stop at the military itself and the industry, but also applied to the sphere of politics. The contribution that women made during the war effort was critical in gaining support on women suffrage in most countries. Post war politics did not necessarily include women in politics, however. Although the representation of women remained low, the early post-war period served as the foundation to enhance gender equilibrium in the future years (Miller & Weaver, 2024). These small achievements regarding women rights and their participation are political very very relevant to the bigger feministic movements that would arise later in the 20 th century. Finally, it is important to note that the wars more than any other events in the 20th century had a great impact on changes in the gender roles despite all the socioeconomic challenges there were. Women made a significant advancement in military, industrial, resistance and intelligence work yet, social expectations returned women in the traditional framework after the war. The events that took place during the war provided valuable clues on what women were capable of doing and this would later benefit the gender equality cause. The role of women in such battles was very critical. They signaled the beginning of a new era when the notion of gender role in politics, labor, and the social life of the population began to gradually change forever.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of this work highlights the instrumental impact women had in revising the gender norms in the 20th century through their wartime contributions. The participation of women in military, industrial, resistance, spy, and politics marked a major change in the societal ideals of what gender roles were all about. Years immediately following the war were marked with some reverses but the war years paved the way to fundamental shifts in gender equality in the workplace, politics and other aspects. Women cut across this issue to making significant contributions to the national defence and military activities as evident in their participation in support positions during the First World War or combat positions during the Second World War. Many women took jobs in factories and a well-known image of Rosie the Riveter is one such example. But, the society attempted to push women out of their roles after the war. In addition, female contributions in resistance movements as well as intelligence affairs are not highly regarded in the conventional history books. These shifts in the roles women have to play during wartime provisions prepared the way to the gender equality campaigns later. Women have remained to struggle with the aspects of traditional gender roles and strive in demanding more to be represented in politics and business. The war not only empowered women more within the society but also led to lasting changes to culture which today could still be felt in regard to the struggle of gender equality.

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