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**British Women's Political Struggle during the
Twentieth Century**

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for a
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilisation*

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*It is with the warmest gratitude that I dedicate this work to my greatest supporters;
my lovely parents and siblings.*

To my friends and classmates; thank you for this great journey.

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Abstract

The aims of British women's political struggle during the 20th century were primarily to achieve equal rights, particularly the right to vote, as well as to ensure better representation of women in political and public institutions. They sought to transform laws regarding work, family, education and health in order to improve their social and economic status. This fight began with movements such as the suffragettes at the turn of the century and continued with the active participation of women in political parties, trade unions and pressure groups for gender equality. The conclusion of this struggle is that it resulted in important legislative changes, notably the right to vote for women in 1918 (and then in 1928 on an equal footing with men) and a greater presence of women in the political sphere, although inequalities still persist at certain levels.

Keywords: British women, political struggle, feminism, sexual revolution, LGBTQ

List of Acronyms

NUWSS: National Union of Women's Suffrage Society

UK: United Kingdoms

WLM: Women's Liberal Movement

WSPU: Women's Social and Political Union

General Introduction

In the annals of history, the 20th century stands as a pivotal epoch in the ongoing saga of human progress and societal transformation. Amidst the tumultuous currents of political upheaval and cultural evolution, one narrative stands out prominently — the tireless struggle of British women for political rights and equality. As the century unfolded, British women found themselves at the vanguard of a movement that sought to dismantle entrenched barriers, challenge centuries-old conventions, and redefine the very fabric of society.

The turn of the 20th century saw Britain as a global superpower, yet within its shores, a stark reality persisted — women were largely disenfranchised and relegated to secondary roles in both the public and private spheres. Denied the basic right to vote, women faced systemic discrimination and societal constraints that stifled their aspirations and relegated them to the margins of political discourse.

The struggle for women's suffrage, a cornerstone of the broader feminist movement, held profound significance not only for British society but for the global struggle for equality and justice. The battle waged by British women during this period served as a rallying cry for social reformers worldwide, inspiring generations to challenge injustice and advocate for gender equality.

This narrative traverses the entire breadth of the 20th century, encompassing a myriad of events, movements, and milestones that shaped the course of women's political struggle in Britain. From the militant activism of the suffragettes to the landmark legislative victories that finally granted women the right to vote, the journey of British women towards political empowerment is a testament to the indomitable spirit of human resilience and determination.

Throughout the 20th century, British women navigated a complex and arduous path towards political emancipation, confronting entrenched patriarchy, societal norms, and institutional resistance. Their collective struggle, marked by resilience, ingenuity, and unwavering resolve, not only transformed the political landscape of Britain but left an indelible imprint on the global fight for gender equality.

Thus, this extended essay aims to examine and explore the evolution of women's struggle to real recognition and obtain their rights. In this light, this dissertation is dedicated to answer the following questions:

1. How could British women obtain their social and political rights?
2. What were the main Consequences of women's liberation?

As possible answers to the mentioned questions, the following hypotheses are suggested:

- There had been a lot of struggles fought by women during 20th century to call for their rights and gain recognition.
- women's liberation and significant consequences of British social structure in a whole mainly on marriage institution, gender role, single parents' phenomenon, bastardy, etc.

This study will delve into the multifaceted dimensions of British women's political struggle during the 20th century, tracing its evolution, examining its key protagonists and adversaries, and analyzing its enduring impact on the fabric of British society. Through a comprehensive exploration of archival sources, historical accounts, and scholarly analysis, this study seeks to illuminate the untold stories, overlooked voices, and overlooked voices that have shaped the trajectory of women's rights in Britain and beyond.

Our work is divided into three chapters between general introduction and general conclusion. The first chapter talks about historical background of British women's role in the eighteenth century in several fields: society, politics, economic and religion. In this period British women were persecuted by society that considered them at home, they were largely in charge of domestic tasks such as taking care of children, house work and seeing to their husband's need.

The second chapter is concerned with the rise of Feminism in the 20th century. The British women fought for their rights by their suffrage campaign to get the vote and other rights have followed it after.

The third chapter discusses women's liberation. In this period the British women wanted to live as men without social restrictions and they created sexual revolution which sparked debates on issues such as contraception, abortion, and sexual freedom, challenging existing legal and cultural frameworks, the causes and the Consequences of this revolution.

Alongside the primary resources, this extended essay also employed a variety of secondary materials like biographies, essays, articles, research works, and videos to

attempt and answer the questions listed above. When it comes to the methodology and organization of the research, the seventh edition of *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* was followed.

Chapter One

Historical Background

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Introduction

Until the nineteenth century women in Britain were persecuted by a society that considered women's place at home and viewed women as servants to men. In most instances, by marriage, the husband and wife became one person and that person was the husband. Therefore, British women suffered in order to get equal rights that men had always enjoy, which led to the emergence of Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain

1.1. Women's conditions during 19th century

The conditions for women in the 19th century Britain were vastly different from today's standards, characterized by restrictive social norms, limited legal rights, and a patriarchal society that placed women in subordinate roles to men. Understanding the context of women's lives during this period helps illuminate the challenges they faced and the foundation upon which the women's rights movement of the 20th century was ¹built.

During the 19th century, the prevailing social and cultural norms dictated that a woman's primary role was as a wife and mother. The Victorian era, named after Queen Victoria who reigned from 1837 to 1901, was particularly known for its strict moral code and emphasis on domesticity. Women were expected to be virtuous, submissive, and focused on their roles within the home.

Educational opportunities for women were limited during the 19th century. Most girls received little formal education beyond basic literacy and numeracy, and higher education was generally reserved for men. There were, however, some pioneering women

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who fought for and gained access to education, challenging societal expectations and paving the way for future generations of women.

Women's employment opportunities were largely confined to low-paying, domestic, or "feminine" occupations such as teaching, nursing, and domestic service. Women who did work outside the home often faced discrimination, lower wages, and limited career advancement² opportunities compared to their male counterparts. Married women, in particular, faced societal pressure to prioritize their roles as wives and mothers over paid employment.

Legally, women were considered the property of their husbands upon marriage, a concept known as coverture. This meant that women had limited legal rights and protections, and were largely dependent on their husbands for financial support and legal representation. Divorce was difficult to obtain and often carried a social stigma, making it a less viable option for women seeking to escape unhappy or abusive marriages.

Women were largely excluded from political participation during the 19th century. They were denied the right to vote and hold public office, effectively silencing their voices in matters of governance and policy. This lack of political representation was a significant barrier to women's rights and equality, fueling the suffrage movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Healthcare and reproductive rights were also areas where women faced significant challenges. Access to healthcare services was limited, and women's reproductive choices and autonomy were often controlled by societal and legal restrictions. The lack of

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knowledge about women's health issues and the taboo surrounding topics such as menstruation and childbirth further marginalized women's experiences and needs.

In conclusion, the conditions for women in 19th century Britain were characterized by societal expectations that confined them to subordinate roles, limited educational and employment opportunities, and restricted legal and political rights. Despite these challenges, many women found ways to challenge and subvert these norms, laying the groundwork for the women's rights movement that would gain momentum in the 20th century. Their resilience, courage, and determination³ in the face of adversity continue to inspire and inform efforts to achieve gender equality and social justice today.

1.1.1. Women social and economic conditions

The social and economic conditions for women during the 19th century in Britain were deeply influenced by prevailing societal norms⁴, economic structures, and legal frameworks that limited women's opportunities and autonomy. These conditions varied across different social classes, but common themes of inequality and restriction were prevalent. Society held strict expectations for women to be submissive, virtuous, and primarily focused on domestic roles. The idealized "Angel of the House" was expected to be a devoted wife and mother, placing her family's needs above her own.

Marriage was often considered the ultimate goal for women, providing financial security and social status. However, the legal concept of coverture meant that upon marriage, women's legal and economic rights were transferred to their husbands. This

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made them economically dependent and limited their ability to own property, enter into contracts, or pursue legal actions independently.

Women's reproductive roles were highly valued, but also highly regulated by societal norms and expectations. Large families were common, and women faced significant health risks associated with frequent childbirth. Birth control was limited and often met with moral and religious objections.

Educational opportunities for women were limited, especially beyond basic literacy and domestic skills. There was a belief that too much education⁵ could make women unfit for their domestic roles. However, there were some progressive movements advocating for women's education, leading to the establishment of girls' schools and colleges by the end of the century.

Women's employment opportunities were largely confined to low-paying, domestic, or "feminine" occupations such as teaching, nursing, and domestic service. These jobs were often seen as extensions of women's domestic roles and were undervalued compared to "male" occupations.

Women typically earned significantly lower wages than men for similar work. They also faced poor working conditions, long hours, and limited opportunities for advancement. The textile industry, for example, employed large numbers of women in factories under harsh conditions. Due to limited employment opportunities and the legal constraints of coverture, many women were economically⁶ dependent on male relatives or husbands. This dependency could leave women vulnerable to economic hardship, especially in cases of widowhood, abandonment, or divorce.

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While opportunities for women to engage in entrepreneurship were limited, there were some enterprising women who managed to start and run their own businesses. These women often faced societal and legal challenges but⁷ paved the way for future generations of female entrepreneurs. The social and economic conditions for women during the 19th century in Britain were characterized by inequality, restriction, and dependency. Women faced limited opportunities for education and employment, restrictive societal norms that confined them to domestic roles, and legal frameworks that denied them autonomy and economic independence.

Despite these challenges, many women found ways to navigate and challenge these constraints, demonstrating resilience, creativity, and determination. The seeds of change were sown during this period, as pioneering women and reformers began to advocate for women's rights, education, and economic opportunities. Their efforts laid the groundwork for the women's rights movement of the 20th century, which would continue the struggle⁸ for gender equality, social justice, and economic empowerment.

1.1.2. Gender Roles

Gender roles during the 19th century in Britain were deeply entrenched in societal norms and expectations that prescribed specific behaviors, responsibilities, and opportunities based on one's gender. These roles were largely shaped by patriarchal values and beliefs, and they had a profound impact on the lives of both men and women.

Men were expected to be the primary breadwinners for their families, responsible for earning a living and providing financial support. They were primarily associated with the

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public sphere, which included⁹ politics, business, and other professional occupations. Their participation in public life was valued and encouraged|beside they held authority and control within the family and society at large. They were seen as the heads of households, making important decisions and exerting influence over their wives and children. Expressing vulnerability or emotions was often seen as a sign of weakness. Men were expected to display emotional restraint and maintain a stoic demeanor.

Women were primarily responsible for domestic duties and child-rearing. Their roles as homemakers were considered their primary and most important contribution to society. They were largely confined to the private sphere of the home, with limited opportunities for participation in public life or professional occupations, in addition Women were expected to be submissive to male authority and adhere to strict moral codes of virtue and chastity. Their value was often linked to their purity and virtue □ moreover they were often viewed as the emotional caregivers¹⁰ within the family, responsible for nurturing and emotional support.

While these gender roles were deeply entrenched, there were individuals and movements that challenged and subverted these norms. Some women, particularly those from higher social classes, pursued education, literature, and philanthropy, carving out spaces for themselves outside traditional domestic roles. The women's suffrage movement, which gained momentum in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was a significant challenge to traditional gender roles. Suffragists and suffragettes argued for women's rights to participate in public life, vote, and hold public office, challenging the notion that women's primary roles were confined to the domestic sphere.

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Gender roles during the 19th century in Britain were rigidly defined by societal norms and expectations that prescribed specific roles, behaviors, and opportunities based on one's gender. While men were largely associated with the public sphere and held authority and control within society, women were confined to the domestic sphere and expected to be submissive, virtuous homemakers.

Despite these restrictive gender roles, there were individuals and movements that challenged and subverted these norms, paving the way for future generations to question, redefine, and reshape gender roles and expectations. The struggle for gender equality and the reevaluation of traditional gender roles continues to be a central theme in discussions of gender, society, and culture today.

1.1.3. Women's rights

The struggle for women's rights has been a long and complex journey, marked by advocacy, activism, and significant social, political, and legal changes. In 19th century Britain, women faced numerous challenges and restrictions due to deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and legal inequalities. The fight for women's rights during this period laid the groundwork for the broader women's rights movement of the 20th century.

Suffrage Movement One of prominent and influential movements of the 19th century the most was the suffrage movement, which advocated for women's right to vote. Leaders like Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters, Sylvia and Christabel, founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in 1903, employing both peaceful protests and more militant tactics to draw attention to their cause. The struggle for suffrage was a central focus of the women's rights movement throughout the century, culminating in limited voting rights for women with the Representation of the People Act in 1918.

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Legal reforms were crucial to advancing women's rights in the 19th century. The Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 were landmark pieces of legislation that granted married women the right to own property and keep their own earnings. These reforms challenged the legal concept of coverture, which had previously rendered women financially dependent on their husbands.

Education Advocates for women's rights also fought for increased educational opportunities for women. While educational opportunities¹¹ were still limited compared to those available to men, the establishment of girls' schools and colleges in the latter half of the 19th century marked progress toward greater educational equality. The issue of reproductive rights was also a concern for women's rights advocates in the 19th century. Limited access to contraception and restrictive laws governing abortion meant that women had limited control over their reproductive choices and autonomy.

The efforts of women's rights advocates in the 19th century laid the groundwork for future advancements in women's rights and gender equality. While the achievements of the 19th century were significant, they were just the beginning of a long and ongoing struggle for women's rights. The women's rights movement of the 20th century built upon the foundations laid by their 19th century predecessors, achieving further legislative reforms, expanding educational and employment opportunities for women, and challenging societal norms and expectations around gender roles and equality.

The fight for women's rights in 19th century Britain was a pivotal period in the history of the women's rights movement. Despite facing numerous challenges and obstacles, women's rights advocates made significant strides in advancing women's legal,

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political, and social equality. Their courage, determination, and resilience continue to inspire and inform ongoing efforts to achieve full gender equality and social justice today.

1.2. The beginning of British women's political struggle

The beginning of British women's political struggle can be traced back to the 19th century, when women began to organize and advocate for their rights in a society dominated by patriarchal values and norms. The seeds of this political struggle were sown in response to the restrictive conditions and inequalities faced by women in various aspects of their lives.

The early 19th century saw the emergence of feminist thought and activism, with writers and thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft publishing works that challenged prevailing notions about women's inferiority and advocated for women's rights and equality. Women's involvement in temperance and moral reform movements provided early opportunities for political activism. These movements allowed women to organize, mobilize, and gain experience in political advocacy and organizing.

The women's suffrage movement, which aimed to secure women's right to vote, was a central and defining aspect of British women's political struggle. The first wave of feminism, spanning the late 19th and early 20th centuries, saw the rise of organized suffrage campaigns and organizations. Leaders like Millicent Fawcett and Emmeline Pankhurst played crucial roles in advocating for women's suffrage through peaceful protests, public campaigns, and political lobbying.

The suffragette movement, led by the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) founded by Emmeline Pankhurst in 1903, employed more militant tactics to draw attention to their cause. These tactics included public demonstrations, hunger strikes, and

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acts of civil disobedience, which brought national and international attention to the suffrage movement.

The women's suffrage movement faced significant challenges and opposition from various quarters, including the government, the police, and anti-suffrage groups, moreover the government was initially resistant to granting women the right to vote, viewing suffrage as a threat to the established order and traditional gender roles. In addition, public opinion was divided on the issue of women's suffrage, with some supporting women's rights to vote and others opposing it. Anti-suffrage groups argued that women were unfit for political participation, reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices about women's abilities and roles.

1.2.1. Government reaction towards women's struggles

In 19th century Britain, laws concerning poverty, divorce, and other social issues were largely influenced by societal norms and values, reflecting a patriarchal society where women had limited rights and legal protections. These laws often perpetuated inequalities and discrimination, particularly against women, and were a significant focus of reform efforts by social reformers and women's rights advocates.

The Poor Laws of the 19th century were a series of laws that governed the provision of welfare to the poor and destitute. The laws were designed to provide relief to those unable to support themselves, but they were often harsh and punitive. The Workhouse system, established under the Poor Laws, provided shelter and work for the poor but was often characterized by harsh conditions and punitive measures. Women, particularly unmarried mothers and widows, were among the most vulnerable and were often stigmatized and marginalized within the Workhouse system.

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In the absence of comprehensive welfare provisions, charity and philanthropy played a significant role in providing support to the poor and needy. However, these efforts were often paternalistic and did little to address the underlying causes of poverty or empower women to improve their circumstances.

Prior to the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, divorce in Britain was a complex and expensive process that required an act of Parliament. The 1857 Act established a new legal framework for divorce, allowing ordinary people to petition for divorce in civil courts. The 1857 Act allowed divorce on the grounds of adultery for men and adultery coupled with other offenses (such as cruelty or desertion) for women. The law was biased against women, making it more difficult for them to obtain a divorce compared to men.

Divorce laws also favored men in matters of custody and property. Under the prevailing legal concept of coverture, women's legal and economic rights were transferred to their husbands upon marriage, leaving them economically dependent and disadvantaged in divorce proceedings.

Social reformers and women's rights advocates campaigned for changes to the Poor Laws and divorce laws to provide greater protections and rights for women and the poor. The women's suffrage movement and other women's rights organizations also advocated for reforms to laws affecting women's rights, including divorce laws and property rights. Over time, legal reforms were implemented to address some of the inequalities and injustices in the law. The Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 were significant reforms that granted married women the right to own property and keep their own earnings, challenging the legal concept of coverture.

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The laws concerning poverty and divorce in 19th century Britain were reflective of a society characterized by inequality, discrimination, and patriarchal values. Women, in particular, faced significant legal and societal barriers that limited their rights, protections, and opportunities. Despite these challenges, social reformers, women's rights advocates, and progressive lawmakers worked tirelessly to challenge and change these laws, laying the groundwork for future legal reforms and advancements¹² in women's rights and social justice. The struggles and achievements of these reformers and advocates continue to inspire and inform ongoing efforts to address poverty, inequality, and discrimination in contemporary society.

1.2.2. The national of women's suffrage societies SWSS

The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) was one of the leading organizations advocating for women's suffrage in Britain during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Unlike the more militant and radical Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), the NUWSS adopted a more moderate¹³ and peaceful approach to campaigning for women's voting rights.

The NUWSS was founded in 1897 by Millicent Fawcett, a prominent suffragist and women's rights advocate. Fawcett was a strong believer in peaceful and constitutional methods of campaigning and believed in working within the existing political system to achieve women's suffrage

The NUWSS focused on using constitutional and peaceful methods to campaign for women's suffrage. They organized public meetings, petitions, and lobbied Members of

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Parliament to support women's voting rights. It placed a strong emphasis on raising public awareness about the suffrage cause. They published newspapers, distributed leaflets, and organized public lectures and rallies to educate the public and gain support for their campaign.

The NUWSS believed in building broad-based coalitions and working with other organizations and groups that shared their goals. They formed alliances with trade unions, political parties, and other women's organizations to strengthen¹⁴ their campaign and build a wider base of support.

Despite their peaceful methods, the NUWSS faced significant resistance and opposition from the government and many Members of Parliament. The government was initially resistant to granting women the right to vote, viewing suffrage as a threat to the established order and traditional gender roles. Public opinion was divided on the issue of women's suffrage, with some supporting women's right to vote and others opposing it. Anti-suffrage groups argued that women were unfit for political participation and reinforced stereotypes and prejudices about women's abilities and roles. The NUWSS also faced competition and rivalry from the more militant WSPU, which employed more radical and militant¹⁵ tactics in their campaign for women's suffrage. This competition sometimes led to tensions and disagreements within the broader suffrage movement.

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1.3. Literature as a means for political struggle

Literature has traditionally been an effective means of expressing, examining, and criticizing political conflicts. Writers and philosophers have used literature to express their ideas, challenge dominant beliefs, and motivate readers to engage with political concerns and movements. Literature is a reflection of society and a catalyst for change, providing insights into the intricacies of political battles and the human experience.

It is literature that describes an era marked by significant change. It reflects Victorian intellectual traditions, addressing the status question through assessments of society, law, industrialism, and historical ideals. It has one main mission: point the finger at social problems and elevate people's consciousness. So, realism is a narrative method in Victorian writing that seeks to convey life without idealizing romantic themes. Thus, some of the issues handled in the literary achievement are the industrial revolution and its effect on Victorian society, which was the motivation for many writers.

It was a watershed moment in history, and their works are inextricably linked to that period. Furthermore, the socioeconomic changes brought about by industrialization were critical to the development of literary realism. For example, consider the impact on youngsters who were compelled to work in poor conditions for significantly lower wages. moreover, women who largely sought occupations in domestic service, textile mills, and piece workshops worked long hours for poor pay. In addition, it has a significant impact on the plot and setting of numerous outstanding works. Although the Industrial Revolution predominantly influenced the economy, it also had an impact on class, family life, and so on.

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In this way, Victorian literature had a strong, political perspective since it critiqued socioeconomic circumstances such as power, class struggle, and women's rights. It tends to be near to people's daily lives, portraying their inner feelings and exterior conditions in the most genuine way.

The nineteenth century associates the Victorian period with realist works that attempt to represent the world and the mind; it strives to reflect the Victorian world with its social concerns, as well as to express the writers' personal private emotions and define what is real in literary fiction. Jane Austen was one of those literary titans who marked the history of British literature. Most of her writing had the same plot that focuses on women during that time. Her novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) demonstrated this fact, indicating that the novels are romantic. Her primary concern was in her heroine's moral, social, and psychological behavior. She writes primarily about youthful heroines as they mature and seek personal satisfaction.

Thus, in the nineteenth century, the novel served as a tool for writers to communicate social criticism. The source provided the reader with a clear picture of what was going during that time period. Furthermore, it was a realistic depiction of Britain amid its industrialization. It was a new form that emerged from theater. In addition, Charlotte Brontë's works protest the miserable conditions by showing various societal difficulties and expressing her own views on women's conditions. They allow the reader to learn about the characteristics of the persons in the writings, as well as the symbols that characterize nineteenth-century English society.

Literature plays a vital role in political struggles by providing a platform for expression, critique, and inspiration. Through literature, writers and thinkers can articulate their views, challenge prevailing ideologies, and inspire readers to engage with political

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issues and movements. Whether through exploring political themes, critiquing authority, inspiring¹⁶ activism, or building empathy, literature offers valuable insights into the complexities of political struggles and the human condition.

Conclusion

The 19th century witnessed a profound shift in social consciousness regarding the status and rights of women, leading to the emergence of feminist movements that sought to challenge and redefine traditional gender roles and inequalities. This period, often referred to as the "Rise of Feminism," marked a significant turning point in the history of women's rights and paved the way for the modern feminist movement.

Chapter Two

The Rise of Feminism in the 20th Century

Introduction

The early 20th century was marked by the dynamic activism of the suffragettes and suffragists, each advocating for women's voting rights with varying degrees of militancy and peaceful protest. Their efforts culminated in the Representation of the People Act in 1918, granting some women the right to vote for the first time, a significant milestone that marked the beginning of broader political engagement for women.

2.1. Women's social and political union

The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was actually founded in the early 20th century, specifically in 1903. It was established by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia, along with other prominent suffragettes of the time. The WSPU was a key organization in the women's suffrage movement in the United Kingdom, advocating for the right of women to vote.

During the late 19th century, the suffrage movement in the UK was already gaining momentum, but it was primarily organized by non-militant suffragists, such as the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), led by Millicent Fawcett. However, it wasn't until the founding of the WSPU in the early 20th century that the suffrage movement took on a more militant and confrontational approach.

The WSPU's tactics included organizing protests, demonstrations, and acts of civil disobedience to draw attention to the cause of women's suffrage. These tactics often led to confrontations with authorities, arrests, and imprisonment of its members. The organization's motto, "Deeds, not words," reflected its commitment to direct action and militant tactics in pursuit of women's voting rights. The suffragettes of the WSPU were known for their

boldness, courage, and willingness to sacrifice for their cause, including engaging in hunger strikes while in prison.

2.1.1. Male and female anti-suffragist

Both male and female anti-suffragists were individuals who opposed the women's suffrage movement, advocating against granting women the right to vote. Male anti-suffragists often held traditional views of gender roles and believed that women's involvement in politics would disrupt the social order. They argued that women's primary role should be within the domestic sphere, focusing on family and household duties rather than engaging in the public sphere of politics.

Female anti-suffragists, on the other hand, often shared similar beliefs about gender roles and the importance of preserving traditional values. Some feared that women's suffrage would lead to the erosion of family values and societal stability. They argued that women were inherently different from¹⁷ men and that their involvement in politics would be detrimental to both women themselves and society as a whole.

Anti-suffragist groups organized campaigns and used various tactics to oppose women's suffrage, including publishing pamphlets and articles, organizing public lectures, and lobbying politicians. They often emphasized the differences between men and women, arguing that women's suffrage would undermine the natural order of society.

Despite their efforts, the women's suffrage movement ultimately prevailed in many countries, leading to significant advances in women's rights and political participation. However, anti-suffragist sentiments persisted in some circles even after suffrage was granted, reflecting enduring debates about gender roles and the role of women in society.

2.1.2. The participation of NUWSS and WSPU in the First World War

The First World War had profound effects on women's participation in society, including the activities of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), two prominent organizations¹⁸ in the women's suffrage movement in the United Kingdom.

The NUWSS, led by Millicent Fawcett, suspended its suffrage campaign during the war and redirected its efforts towards supporting the war effort. Many members of the NUWSS volunteered in various roles, including nursing, working in munitions factories, and supporting the war effort on the home front. Their involvement in war-related activities helped to demonstrate women's capabilities and contributions outside of the domestic sphere, challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

The WSPU, under the leadership of Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters, adopted a more militant approach prior to the war, including acts of civil disobedience and protests. With the outbreak of war, the WSPU shifted its focus to supporting the war effort, suspending its militant activities. Some members of the WSPU, including Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, actively supported the war by engaging in patriotic activities and encouraging women to contribute to the war effort. However, not all members of the WSPU agreed with this approach, leading to divisions within the organization.

There were important effects of WWI on Women cause the war created new opportunities for women in the workforce, particularly in industries traditionally dominated by men, such as manufacturing and transportation. Women's participation in the war effort played a crucial role in the eventual granting of suffrage rights to women in the UK, as their

contributions helped to challenge traditional gender roles and perceptions of women's capabilities. After the war, the experiences of women during wartime contributed to a shift in societal attitudes towards women's rights and paved the way for further advancements in women's political and social status.

Overall, the First World War had a transformative impact on women's roles and opportunities, influencing the strategies and activities of both the NUWSS and the WSPU and contributing to the broader struggle for women's rights and suffrage.

2.2. Politics and women

Women's involvement in politics has evolved significantly over time, shaped by cultural, social, and legal factors. Historically, women have been marginalized from political participation due to social norms, legal restrictions, and cultural attitudes that relegated them to the private sphere. For much of history, women were excluded from voting, holding public office, and participating in political decision-making processes.

The fight for women's suffrage, which gained momentum in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was a pivotal moment in women's political history. Suffragists campaigned tirelessly for the right to vote, challenging discriminatory laws and societal norms. The granting of suffrage rights to women in various countries represented a significant¹⁹ step towards gender equality and expanded women's opportunities for political engagement.

Despite gaining suffrage rights, women have often been underrepresented in political institutions, including legislatures, cabinets, and executive offices. The lack of female representation in politics²⁰ can be attributed to various factors, including systemic barriers, gender bias, and cultural expectations. In recent decades, there has been progress in increasing

the representation of women in political leadership positions. More women have been elected to national parliaments, serving as heads of state, heads of government, and cabinet ministers. Examples include Angela Merkel, who served as Chancellor of Germany, and Jacinda Ardern, who is the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

Despite advancements, gender gaps persist in political participation and representation. Women continue to face obstacles such as discriminatory laws, limited access to resources and funding, and gender-based violence. Closing these gaps requires concerted efforts to address systemic inequalities and promote gender-responsive policies and institutions.

Women's experiences in politics are shaped by intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and disability. Intersectional analysis is crucial for understanding the diverse challenges and barriers faced by women in politics and developing inclusive approaches to address them. Women's political empowerment involves not only increasing their representation in formal political institutions but also empowering women as voters, activists, and leaders within their communities. Women's advocacy organizations play a vital role in mobilizing women, advocating for policy change, and promoting women's rights and interests.

Overall, women's involvement in politics is essential for achieving gender equality, inclusive governance, and social justice. By addressing barriers to women's political participation and promoting gender-responsive policies, societies can harness the full potential of women's leadership and contributions to advance democracy and human rights.

2.2.1. Election of 1918

The election of 1918 was a significant event in British political history, marking the first general election held after the First World War and the passage of the Representation of

the People Act 1918, which extended voting rights to certain women for the first time. Representation of the People Act 1918 was a landmark moment in British democracy. It granted the vote to men over the age of 21 and some women over the age of 30 who met certain property qualifications or were married to men who did. While not full suffrage, it was a significant expansion of voting rights and represented a partial victory for the women's suffrage movement.

The election took place against the backdrop of the aftermath of the First World War. The war had led to significant social and political changes, including debates over the role of women in society, the treatment of returning soldiers, and the future direction of the country. The election resulted in a landslide victory for the coalition government led by Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who had overseen the country during the latter part of the war. The coalition consisted of Conservatives and Liberals who had united to govern during the war.

The election also saw gains for the Labour Party, which emerged as a significant political force, particularly in urban areas and among working-class voters. This marked a shift in British politics towards greater representation for the interests of the working class. While the Representation of the People Act 1918 granted voting rights to some women, it did not achieve full suffrage. However, it was a step towards greater gender equality in politics and paved the way for further advancements in women's rights, including the eventual granting of full suffrage in 1928 with the Equal Franchise Act. Overall, the election of 1918 was a pivotal moment in British political history, reflecting the social and political changes brought about by the First World War and the evolving dynamics of democracy and representation in the early 20th century.

2.2.2. The Marche of 1928 equal franchise act

The Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act of 1928 was a significant milestone in British political history, as it finally granted equal voting rights to men and women over the age of 21, regardless of property ownership or marital status. The Equal Franchise Act of 1928 completed the process of women's suffrage in the United Kingdom by removing the remaining gender-based voting restrictions. Previously, the Representation of the People Act 1918 had granted voting rights to women over 30 who met certain property qualifications or were married to men who did. The 1928 act extended suffrage to all women over the age of 21 on the same terms as men.

The passage of the Equal Franchise Act was the culmination of decades of activism and advocacy by the women's suffrage movement. Organizations such as the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) had campaigned tirelessly for women's right to vote since the late 19th century. The aftermath of World War I played a crucial role in advancing women's suffrage. Women's contributions to the war effort, both on the home front and in various roles previously restricted to men, helped shift societal attitudes towards greater recognition of women's rights and capabilities.

The Equal Franchise Act of 1928 marked a significant step towards the democratization of British society. It ensured that women had the same political rights as men and helped to further solidify the principles of equality²¹ and representation in the electoral system. The passage of the Equal Franchise Act was a watershed moment in the history of gender equality and women's rights in the United Kingdom. It paved the way for increased participation of women in politics and public life, leading to greater diversity and inclusivity

in decision-making processes. Overall, the Equal Franchise Act of 1928 represented a triumph for the women's suffrage movement and a milestone in the ongoing struggle for gender equality and democratic rights.

2.3. Legislation 1945-70's

The period following World War II and extending into the 1960s witnessed significant legal and legislative developments across various countries, reflecting social, economic, and political changes. Women's rights movement, diversified social movement, largely based in the United States that in the 1960s and '70s sought equal rights and opportunities and more personal freedom for women.

Civil Rights Legislation in the United States: The 1950s and 1960s saw the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, which led to landmark legislation aimed at ending racial segregation and discrimination. Key laws included the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which aimed to overcome barriers to voting for African Americans.

Women's Rights Legislation: The post-World War II period also saw advancements in women's rights and gender equality. In the United States, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 included provisions prohibiting employment discrimination based on sex. Additionally, the introduction of birth control pills in the 1960s and the subsequent Supreme Court case *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965) legalized contraception for married couples, laying the groundwork for reproductive rights.

Labor Rights and Welfare Legislation: The post-war period also saw the expansion of labor rights and welfare legislation in many countries. In the United Kingdom, for instance,

the National Health Service (NHS) was established in 1948, providing universal healthcare, while the Welfare State was expanded to include measures such as social security and unemployment benefits.

International Human Rights Instruments: The period following World War II saw the development and adoption of key international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). These instruments set forth fundamental rights and freedoms that were later incorporated into national legal systems. The period from 1945 to the 1970s witnessed significant legal and legislative changes that shaped the modern legal landscape, advancing civil rights, women's rights, environmental protection, and social welfare across the globe.

We can show that British women were influenced by the feminist movement in United States. The women workplaces and universities. The passage of Title IX in 1972, which forbade sex discrimination in any educational program that received federal financial assistance, had a dramatic effect on leveling the playing field in girls' athletics. Feminists also made then workplace a more welcoming space for women by enacting policies that prohibited sexual harassment, which the Equal Opportunity Commission. The Act applied equally to men and women, making it illegal to discriminate against either sex on the ground of sex. It extended its coverage to marital status, but only in the job area and only to those who were married, not singles. The Equal Pay statute 1970 was a United Kingdom Parliament statute that outlawed men and women from receiving unequal pay and working conditions.

Conclusion

The rise of feminism in the 20th century marks a pivotal moment in the history of women's rights and gender equality. Throughout this transformative era, women around the world began to challenge entrenched patriarchal norms and demand equal rights, opportunities, and recognition. From the writings of early feminist thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft to the organized activism of suffragists and women's rights advocates, the 20th century witnessed a burgeoning movement for gender justice.

Feminist movements of the 20th century sought to address a wide range of issues affecting women, including suffrage, access to education and employment, reproductive rights, and legal status. Through literature, public speeches, and organized campaigns, feminists raised awareness about the injustices and inequalities faced by women and called for systemic change. This is what the next chapter will examine.

Chapter Three
Women's Liberation

Introduction

The women's liberation movement, also known as feminism, is a socio-political movement advocating for the equal rights, opportunities, and treatment of women. Emerging primarily in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it gained significant momentum in the 1960s and 1970s. Central to its goals are dismantling gender-based discrimination, achieving reproductive rights, combating sexual harassment and violence, and promoting women's representation in leadership roles across all sectors. It has sparked vital discussions and policy changes globally, reshaping societal norms and challenging entrenched gender inequalities.

3.1. Sexual revolution as political challenges

The sexual revolution, which unfolded primarily in the 1960s and 1970s, posed significant political challenges as it confronted traditional norms and institutions regarding sexuality, gender roles, and reproductive rights. It sparked debates on issues such as contraception, abortion, and sexual freedom, challenging existing legal and cultural frameworks. Politically, it led to clashes between conservative forces seeking to maintain traditional values and progressive movements advocating for sexual liberation and autonomy.

These challenges manifested in various ways, including legal battles over reproductive rights, censorship of sexual content in media and literature, and resistance to comprehensive sex education programs in schools. Additionally, the sexual revolution intersected with other political movements, such as feminism and LGBTQ+ rights, creating complex dynamics and alliances.

Moreover, the sexual revolution prompted governments to reconsider their policies on issues like birth control access, abortion legalization, and LGBTQ+ rights. It also influenced broader social and cultural shifts, reshaping attitudes toward sexuality, marriage, and family structures. Overall, the sexual revolution presented both opportunities and obstacles for

political actors, shaping the landscape of social change and activism in the latter half of the 20th century.

3.1.1. Causes of revolution

Revolutionary movements emerge due to a complex interplay of social, economic, political, and cultural factors. Widespread inequality, discrimination, and marginalization based on factors such as class, race, gender, or ethnicity can lead to social unrest and call for change. Authoritarian or repressive regimes, lack of political representation, and suppression of civil liberties can fuel dissatisfaction and resistance among populations seeking greater freedom and democracy.

Poverty, exploitation, unemployment, and economic instability can create conditions ripe for revolution as marginalized groups seek to address their grievances and pursue economic justice. (Stanton) Clashes between different ideological or religious groups, as well as tensions over competing visions for society, can spark revolutionary movements aimed at establishing or defending particular beliefs or values.

Specific incidents or crises, such as government corruption scandals, economic downturns, or instances of state violence, can serve as catalysts for mass mobilization and revolutionary action. Revolutions in neighboring countries or successful struggles for liberation elsewhere can inspire and embolden oppressed groups to pursue their own revolutionary objectives.

Effective leadership, strategic organization, and cohesive mobilization efforts can play crucial roles in orchestrating and sustaining revolutionary movements. Advances in communication technology, such as the internet and social media, can facilitate the rapid dissemination of ideas, coordination of actions, and mobilization of supporters for revolutionary causes. External factors, including foreign interference, intervention, or support

for revolutionary movements, can either bolster or undermine revolutionary efforts, depending on the interests and agendas of external actors.

Deep-seated historical grievances, unresolved conflicts, and systemic injustices accumulated over time can provide the underlying motivation for revolutionary movements seeking to address entrenched problems and injustices. These causes often intersect and reinforce each other, contributing to the complex dynamics of revolutionary processes.

3.1.2. Consequences of the revolution

The aftermath of a revolution yields multifaceted consequences that reverberate across every facet of society. Politically, revolutions invariably bring about profound transformations, as entrenched regimes are toppled, and new forms of governance emerge. This can range from the establishment of democratic institutions to the consolidation of authoritarian rule, depending on the ideologies and actors that shape the course of the revolution. Socially, revolutions disrupt existing hierarchies and norms, often leading to increased social mobility and the empowerment of marginalized groups. However, they can also precipitate social fragmentation and conflict as different factions vie for power and influence in the post-revolutionary landscape.

Economically, revolutions trigger significant reorganization as new governments seek to address issues of inequality and economic injustice. This may involve redistributive measures, such as land reforms or nationalizations, as well as shifts towards different economic models, such as socialism or capitalism. Yet, revolutions can also lead to economic disruption, with periods of instability, inflation, and unemployment destabilizing already vulnerable populations. Culturally, revolutions spark debates and shifts in values, beliefs, and cultural practices as societies grapple with questions of identity and representation. They

inspire new artistic movements, intellectual currents, and expressions of collective memory as narratives of the revolution are constructed and contested.

Internationally, revolutions have far-reaching implications, reshaping diplomatic alliances, regional stability, and global power dynamics. They may provoke reactions from other countries, ranging from support for revolutionary movements to intervention and conflict. Additionally, revolutions serve as potent symbols in national histories, shaping collective memory and national identity for generations to come. However, they also engender ongoing debates and contestations over their meaning and legacy, highlighting the complex and often contradictory consequences of revolutionary upheaval.

3.2. Struggles towards equality

The journey towards equality is marked by numerous struggles across various domains, each with its unique challenges and complexities. The fight for gender equality encompasses efforts to address discrimination, bias, and systemic barriers faced by women and gender minorities. This struggle involves advocating for equal rights, opportunities, and representation in areas such as education, employment, politics, and healthcare. It also encompasses challenging harmful gender norms and stereotypes that perpetuate inequality.

Racial equality entails combating racism, prejudice, and institutionalized discrimination based on race or ethnicity. This struggle involves addressing disparities in areas such as education, criminal justice, housing, and employment, as well as advocating for policies and practices that promote inclusion, diversity, and racial justice.

The struggle for LGBTQ+ rights focus on challenging discrimination, stigma, and violence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals. This includes advocating for legal recognition of same-sex relationships, protection against discrimination, access to healthcare, and affirmation of gender identity and expression. Disability rights

activism aims to promote inclusion, accessibility, and equal opportunities for people with disabilities. This involves advocating for accessibility in the built environment, transportation, education, and employment, as well as challenging stereotypes and promoting the rights and dignity of individuals with disabilities.

Socioeconomic equality addresses disparities in income, wealth, and access to resources and opportunities. This struggle involves advocating for policies that reduce poverty, provide social safety nets, ensure fair wages, and promote economic mobility. It also includes efforts to address systemic factors such as wealth concentration, corporate power, and economic injustice.

Global equality efforts focus on addressing disparities between countries and promoting human rights, development, and peace worldwide. This includes advocating for fair trade, debt relief, access to healthcare and education, and addressing global challenges such as climate change, conflict, and migration.

These struggles are interconnected and intersecting, highlighting the need for intersectional approaches that recognize and address the multiple forms of discrimination and oppression that individuals and communities face. Achieving equality requires sustained activism, advocacy, and collective action across diverse movements and sectors.

3.3.3.1. Main events 80's and 90's women's LGBT struggle

The 1980s and 1990s were pivotal decades for the women's and LGBTQ+ rights movements, marked by significant events and advancements in the struggle for equality and recognition. The emergence of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s disproportionately affected LGBTQ+ communities, particularly gay men. Women, especially those of marginalized backgrounds, were also impacted. Activists, including women, fought for increased awareness, research funding, and support for those affected by HIV/AIDS. Organizations like

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ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) were instrumental in raising awareness and demanding action from governments and healthcare institutions.

Throughout the 1980s, various jurisdictions enacted anti-discrimination laws aimed at protecting individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These laws laid the groundwork for future legal protections and rights for LGBTQ+ individuals, including women.

The 1990s saw increased visibility and activism within the LGBTQ+ community. Organizations like the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and the National Organization for Women (NOW) became more active in advocating for LGBTQ+ rights, including issues affecting LGBTQ+ women. This period also saw the rise of intersectional activism, recognizing the overlapping oppressions faced by LGBTQ+ people, women, and people of color.

In April 1993, tens of thousands of LGBTQ+ activists, including many women, marched on Washington, D.C., demanding equal rights and recognition. The march highlighted issues such as anti-LGBTQ+ violence, discrimination, and the fight for marriage equality. It was one of the largest LGBTQ+ rights demonstrations in history and showcased the growing momentum of the movement.

The 1990s saw the emergence of third-wave feminism, which emphasized intersectionality, diversity, and inclusivity within feminist activism. LGBTQ+ issues, including those affecting queer and transgender women, were central to this wave of feminism. Activists challenged traditional notions of gender and sexuality, advocating for a more expansive understanding of women's experiences and rights. These events and movements in the 1980s and 1990s played a crucial role in advancing the rights and visibility

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of LGBTQ+ individuals, including women, and laid the foundation for continued activism and progress in the 21st century.

Conclusion

The women's liberation movement has been a powerful force for social change, advocating tirelessly for gender equality, reproductive rights, and an end to discrimination and oppression. Through decades of activism, women have challenged patriarchal norms, fought for legal protections, and shattered barriers in politics, the workplace, and society at large. The movement's impact extends far beyond legal and political realms, influencing cultural attitudes and reshaping societal expectations around gender roles and identities. While significant progress has been made, the struggle for women's liberation is ongoing, with persistent inequalities and injustices still to be addressed. As we move forward, it is crucial to continue amplifying women's voices, dismantling systemic barriers, and fostering a more inclusive and equitable world for all genders.

General Conclusion

The political struggle of British women throughout the 20th century stands as a testament to their resilience, determination, and unwavering commitment to achieving equal rights and representation. At the dawn of the century, women found themselves on the fringes of political participation, denied the fundamental right to vote. Yet, spurred by a growing awareness of their disenfranchisement, women began to mobilize, sparking a movement that would reshape the political landscape of Britain.

The suffragette and suffragist movements emerged as powerful forces, demanding suffrage and challenging the entrenched patriarchal norms of the time. Their relentless advocacy, marked by marches, protests, and acts of civil disobedience, gradually eroded resistance, leading to incremental gains in women's political rights. The culmination of their efforts came with the Representation of the People Act of 1918, which granted voting rights to certain categories of women.

However, the struggle for full political equality was far from over. Throughout the interwar period and beyond, women continued to confront barriers to their participation in public life. Despite their newfound ability to vote, women remained vastly underrepresented in political institutions, their voices marginalized and their perspectives often overlooked.

The mid-20th century saw the emergence of second-wave feminism, igniting a renewed push for gender equality across all spheres of society, including politics. Women mobilized once again, advocating for legislative reforms, challenging

discriminatory practices, and demanding greater visibility and influence within the halls of power.

The latter half of the century witnessed significant milestones in the journey towards gender parity in British politics. Legislative measures, such as the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 and the Equality Act of 2010, sought to address systemic inequalities and discrimination. Initiatives promoting women's political representation, such as the introduction of all-women shortlists by political parties, aimed to redress the gender imbalance in elected office.

Despite these advancements, formidable obstacles persisted. Structural barriers, cultural biases, and entrenched gender norms continued to hinder women's progress in politics, limiting their access to leadership positions and decision-making roles. As the 21st century unfolds, the legacy of British women's political struggle endures, serving as a beacon of inspiration for future generations. While considerable strides have been made, the fight for full and equal participation in political life remains ongoing. By continuing to challenge inequities, dismantle barriers, and amplify their voices, British women continue to shape the political landscape, forging a path towards a more inclusive and representative democracy.

We support the sacrifices made by British women to obtain their legitimate rights that they demanded in the 19th and 20th centuries, but in the late 20th and 21st centuries their demands increased and became inconsistent with the nature of life, so they began to demand what is unacceptable to reason, and social trivialities such as single parents' phenomenon, bastardy, AIDS epidemic.

The difficulties that we faced in completing the dissertation were limited due to the limited time, especially since we were transferred from the first level master to the second level in the same year, and this deprived me benefiting from the lessons of the first year of the master, which contain how to complete the notes of the master's, in addition to forced absences because the license to study carries only 4 hours.

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