

THE WORTH OF WIVES: 1950s Corporate America “Discovers” Spousal Social Capital

Christiane Diehl Taylor
Department of History
Eastern Kentucky University

Social capital is an asset that is generated by the relationship between individuals within a social structure. It allows individuals to achieve goals that are unachievable in its absence or achievable only at higher cost. Wives are a form of social capital, and although they have contributed to the success of their husbands and their firms ever since the nineteenth century, corporations only began to acknowledge their worth during the 1950s. This company recognition arose out of the prevalence of large corporations and bureaucratic practices, corporate decentralization, concerns over full-employment and unionization, the emphasis on human relations, and the early rumblings of the modern-day women's movement.

“It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.”

“Behind every successful man stands a good woman.”

These adages exemplify what social scientists call “social capital,” which is an asset generated by a relationship within a social situation. Such a relationship as husband-wife, mentor-mentee, and patron-constituent allow an individual to achieve goals that he/she could not achieve in its absence or could only achieve at a higher cost.¹ Since the 1960s, organizational and managerial theorists and political scientists have employed the concept of social capital to examine such diverse aspects of society as political patronage, entrepreneurship, and movement within organizational hierarchies. Yet the concept of social capital has just begun to enter historical analysis. Only a handful of business historians have begun to employ the concept of social capital, including Pamela Walker Laird who deals with mentorship, or what she calls “pull,” and Jocelyn Wills who examines social network boundaries as determinates of success.²

Just as it took nearly eighty years after the emergence of the field of business history in

the 1930s for its practitioners to discover the value of social capital, it took corporate officials a century after the 1840s adoption of the corporate form here in the United States to realize the benefits of social capital. This tardy recognition is clearly evident in executives' discovery of the value inherent in managerial wives. Although women contributed to the success of their husbands and their firms in the nineteenth century, and most likely even well before that, company officials only began to recognize and systematically utilize these women during the late 1940s and 1950s. The convergence of a number of factors apparently brought about this recognition of the assets inherent in wives. The prevalence of large corporations and bureaucratic practices, the company decentralization movement, concerns about full employment and restricting unionization, the predominance of the human relations school in organizational theory, and the early rumblings of the modern-day women's movement all played roles in firm officials discovering the value of corporate wives.

Well before the turn of the twentieth century, women daily demonstrated their value to the furtherance of their husbands' careers. Mary Mehagan Hill, wife of James J. Hill, head of the Great Northern Railroad, hated the social obligations that accompanied her role as the wife of a leading upper-Midwest and national business figure, and yet the data base from the diaries that she kept between 1880 and 1920 reveals that she had contact with 578 distinct familial groups during that forty year period. Over half the visits she made (52 percent), the dinners, luncheons and overnight guests she hosted (58 percent), and the social and civic functions she attended (66 percent) involved area business people and Great Northern employees and affiliates.³ Mary Hill may have gone about her work, her "business," silently, but not invisibly. She fulfilled her role well enough that at the time of her death in November, 1921, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch* noted:

The wife of the Empire Builder is dead. Eternity has claimed her who exemplified the noblest in American womanhood. She aided her husband the late James J. Hill in his struggle to a great place among his fellow men. Hers was the role of the silent partner.⁴

Even beyond Mary Hill's hometown of St. Paul, Minnesota, the general public learned of the lives, duties, and expected deportment of corporate wives. By 1945, 136 articles covering these topics appeared in such general interest magazines as *American Magazine*, *Everybody's*, *Harpers Weekly*, *Nation*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Among publications targeted at an exclusively female audience, including *Ladies Home Companion*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Better Homes and Gardens*, there were fifty-six articles on the wives of businessmen.⁵ Even movie-goers caught glimpses of such women. By 1945, Hollywood had produced twenty-one movies featuring corporate wives. In the 1934 drama, *Housewife*, Nan Reynolds encouraged her copywriter husband, Bill to open up an advertising agency. When his former girlfriend, Patricia Berkley writes a very successful advertisement for his main client, she and Bill rekindle their old romance. Soon wife Nan and girlfriend Patricia battle over both Bill's affections and who is of more value in the furtherance of his career. The plot of 1940 comedy, *The Hired Wife*, involved advertising man Stephen Dexter marrying an acquaintance, Kendall, in order to close a business deal.

Once the deal is closed, Kendall refuses to divorce Stephen and proceeds to make him a star within his firm.⁶

This pattern of recognizing and publicizing the roles wives played in the careers of their husbands did not extend into the corporate realm. Prior to 1946, business publications included only twenty-one articles on corporate wives. This was less than one-fifth of those that appeared in general interest magazines and less than half of those included in women's publications during the same period. The majority of the pieces in business magazines focused on how the wives of salesmen could assist their husbands in closing or increasing sales and how women needed to act as career morale boosters for their husbands.⁷

The level of inattentiveness displayed by the business press mirrored the lack of attention the heads of firms paid to the wives of their managerial employees. Prior to the end of World War II, few companies offered programs for such women. Even the most prominent companies offering such programs, National Cash Register and the Electrolux Corporation, directed their efforts only to the wives of their salesmen. They had special events for them at their national sales meetings and corresponded regularly with them regarding sales contests in which they included prizes appealing to women, such as automobiles, family vacations, and appliances. Other mailings and workshops coached salesmen's wives on how to serve as their husbands' unpaid secretaries, hostesses, and motivators.⁸

After 1945, however, both the business press and its audience, particularly those holding executive positions, seemed to discover the social capital inherent in all managerial and executive wives and not just the wives of salesmen. Whereas twenty-one articles discussing corporate wives had appeared in business-related publications between 1880 and 1945, thirty-eight emerged between 1946 and 1959. Moreover, that number would more than triple between 1960 and 1979, when business periodicals generated eighty-six articles concerning these women.⁹

This trend did not escape notice. Organizational specialists W. Lloyd Warner and James C. Abegglen began their 1956 *Harvard Business Review* article by noting: "Judging from the content of recent magazine articles, books and movies, the only people more interesting to observers of American society than executives are the wives of executives."¹⁰ A year later, John A. Patton, president of a Chicago management and engineering consulting firm noted in the July 1957 issue of *American Business* that:

Probably the most significant trend in American industrial life in the past decade has been the emergence of the American wife as a business partner, exerting a tremendous influence on her husband's career. It has reached the state where many companies will not hire or promote an executive without taking a good look at his wife.¹¹

Although some of the articles, particularly those appearing in such sales-specific magazines as *Sales Management* focused only on the wives of salesmen, the majority dealt with corporate wives in much broader terms. Among these articles, most were three to four pages long and written either by business reporters who had interviewed

management consultants and select company executives, or management consultants who relayed their experiences working with various corporations. A few, however, were far longer and more sophisticated in their approach to the topic. The most notable of these appeared as a two-part, twenty-one page series in *Fortune* in October and November, 1951. The series was written by William H. Whyte, who would go on to use the material as the basis for his famous 1956 critique of the homogenization of American society, *The Organization Man*. The two *Fortune* articles discussed the results of a study that involved 230 personal, in-depth, open-ended interviews with corporate executives as well as an additional series of personal interviews with what *Fortune's* editors referred to as a "significant number" of these executives' wives as well as management consultants and organizational psychologists and sociologists.¹²

Despite the significant differences in article length and the means that the authors employed to gather their information, the messages conveyed in these pieces were remarkably consistent. Women had to go beyond being good wives and mothers if they were to help ensure that their husbands and their employers achieved their business objectives. Deportment and appearance wise, women were never to overdo or stand out. This equated to tasteful dressing, being discreet, never gossiping, and most important of all, never drinking in excess in any social situation. One had to be a gracious hostess and a good conversationalist who always appeared at ease and put others at ease. The ideal corporate wife knew everyone's name and could readily undertake impromptu entertaining. As noted in *American Business*:

The ideal wife is gracious not only to the 'brass' in the organization but to everyone. She dresses in good taste, but not extravagantly. She does not get involved in company politics, nor repeat gossip that she picks up in the beauty parlor or at cocktail parties about others in the organization.¹³

Company executives also expected these women to create homes which would be safe and restful havens from the work day world and to manage their children so well that they were exclusively a source of pride and not concern for their fathers. While maintaining their homes, women were not to make them showplaces. Their houses and all their other possessions and acquisitions should neither be above or below those of men at the same level as their husbands. As this equality of position implied, they were never to live beyond their means and never be "social climbers." While one may have worked before marriage, most firm officials viewed having a career after marriage as wholly unacceptable. They even believed that managerial and executive wives should avoid part-time work and seek fulfillment through civic involvement and volunteerism. Engaging in community activities enhanced their firms' public images. More importantly, through community involvement, the women created networks with potential customers, suppliers, and even officials who had regulatory powers over their firms.

Empathy, sympathy, encouragement, and uncomplaining acceptance were the watchwords in the relationship between a company manager and his wife. A woman should know just enough about her husband's jobs and his employer that she could be sympathetic and empathetic, yet never directly interfere or show up at the office. While

expected to serve as morale boosters and as women who encouraged their husbands to maximize their potential, executives discouraged wives from pushing too hard and from holding unrealistic expectations of their husbands. The badge of the good corporate wife also included tolerance and amenability to spousal travel and job transfers. They had to acknowledge that their husbands “belonged” first and foremost to the corporations that employed them. Senior managers frowned upon women who sought divorces because of the strains their husbands’ jobs put on their marriages. In instances in which company officials had identified the husband as having executive potential, the firm would even provide counseling in order to save the marriage. The company undertook no such effort if a potential executive or manager divorced his wife, because they presumed that he had just “outgrown” her. They thought that as he had risen through the ranks, he had acquired additional knowledge, new acquaintances, and more sophisticated tastes. While he had grown, corporate officials assumed that his wife had not and therefore had become a hindrance to his further success. As company leaders repeatedly noted “A good wife can’t help as much as a bad wife hurts.”¹⁴

To assist and monitor corporate wives in their endeavors to avoid the “bad wife” label, a number of firms during the 1950s developed specific programs for wives. As noted by an executive interviewed by *Fortune*: “We have an obligation to deliberately plan and create a favorable, constructive attitude on the part of the wife that will liberate her husband’s total energies for the job.”¹⁵ Firms such as Tait Manufacturing Company in Dayton, Ohio, the Lily-Tulip Cup Corporation, and the American Brake Shoe Company created special mailings to wives that outlined their company objectives and the programs that directly affected their managerial husbands. Among executives surveyed by *Fortune*, half noted that they regularly interviewed the wives of candidates for executive positions. The majority of those not doing so indicated that they were beginning to implement the practice. The head of Container Corporation of America remarked that he mandated that all his vice presidents be acquainted with their subordinates’ wives. He expected them to answer questions about these women regarding their health, attitudes toward parenthood, household management skills, and even their appearance and deportment. Revlon began holding formal clinics for its managerial wives that covered entertaining and self-improvement. International Business Machines (IBM) went even a step further; at its key facilities, IBM built country clubs that managerial families could join for a dollar a year. Here, the wives of executives regularly hosted luncheons and clinics for all of the managerial wives who belonged to the club. As Thomas J. Watson, head of IBM noted, the goal was to create “a fairly cohesive social system in which home and business life are brought into increasing harmony.”¹⁶ Yet, cohesiveness did not equate to integrating the wife wholly into the firm. No one wanted wives dropping by the office, becoming familiar with operational detail, giving unsolicited business advice, or even interacting with other company managers and executives too often. An unidentified executive interviewed by *Fortune* exemplified this attitude when he stated that: “On matters directly affecting her, we’ll deal with her closely. Otherwise we don’t want her involved. A good manager has them to a party once or twice a year and makes sure that the rest of the time that no one gets too intimate with anyone else.”¹⁷

Although firm officials attempted to keep wives at arm’s length, they clearly recognized

that they were of value to their companies. Yet, what had led them in the late 1940s and 1950s to finally recognize and attempt to mold and utilize the social capital inherent in wives? No single concern appears to have driven their decisions. Rather a convergence of a number of factors all seemed to have played a role.

By 1960, no one could deny the dominant role large corporations had come to play in American life. Between 1930 and 1950, national income tripled from \$75.4 billion to \$241.1 billion. That figure doubled during the next ten years, reaching \$414.5 billion in 1960, and corporations accounted for more than half that income.¹⁸ By 1950, manufacturing establishments employed 14.4 million workers, and 32 percent of these people worked in firms with one-thousand or more employees, and an additional 27 percent in companies with 250 to 999 employees.¹⁹

The efficient and effective management of these large-scale operations had become synonymous with bureaucratization. By the latter 1950s, standardization had reached such heights that firms including John Deere, Rockwell International, and IBM had office décor guides specifying the square footage, floor and wall coverings, lighting fixtures, office furniture, and even sanitary facilities that each level of managerial employee was entitled to. These firms argued that the guides assured fair and equitable treatment of their employees and a consistent corporate image.²⁰ For the same reasons, firms such as IBM and Honeywell established dress-codes. At Honeywell, first-rung managers and all those above them had to wear white long-sleeved dress shirts and one of two corporate-approved ties, a burgundy and navy diagonally striped version or a solid burgundy one. When traveling on weekends, the company required its managers to wear nothing less formal than casual dress pants and a sports coat and indicated that wearing a tie was optional.²¹ Since employees were to be standardized and scrutinized to assure that they portrayed the right company image, their wives and families should be examined and shaped as well.

While corporate image, bureaucratization, and standardization were familiar words in the business lexicon of the 1950s, the heads of many of America's largest companies were incorporating a new word into their vocabularies: decentralization. Although General Motors had adopted the multi-divisional system of management during the 1920s, few companies followed suit until after World War II. The passage of the Cellar-Kefauver Act in 1950 helped to spur the movement to divisionalization, because the law limited a firm's ability to use horizontal and vertical integration as a growth strategy. By 1970, 86 percent of the largest industrial companies in the U.S. had at least three different divisions, and seventy-three out of the hundred largest U.S. industrial companies had decentralized management structures. Decentralization meant that job promotions increasingly entailed moving. Rising up the corporate ladder became synonymous with job transfers so much that managers at IBM joked that the acronym stood not for International Business Machines, but "I've Been Moved." Company officials recognized that job transfers disrupted routines, destroyed business and community networks, and severed friendships. Rebuilding these required not just time but the willingness to invest oneself in the rebuilding process. This willingness had to exist on the part of both the male employee and his family. In particular, the wife had to view the transfer as both a career opportunity for her husband and as a chance for her and her children to grow and have

new experiences. Therefore it was the firm's responsibility, through programming targeted specifically at managerial wives, to help transferring families replace their natural feelings of uproot, wariness, and fear with senses of opportunity, eagerness, and excitement.²²

Corporate concern over job transfers also emerged out of companies' ever-increasing focus on employee retention. During the 1930s, corporate objectives had primarily revolved around financial survival, and during the early 1940s, company goals focused on aiding in and benefiting from the war effort. Beginning in the latter 1940s however, firms turned their attention to growth, employee recruitment and retention, and blocking unionization or at minimum, limiting its effects on their workforces. Fearing that the conversion from a war-time command economy would thrust the U.S. back into the throes of a severe recession, if not a depression, employment and economic growth became the watchwords of policy-makers. As noted in the Whittington Taft Employment Act of 1946, the federal government:

would promote maximum employment, production and purchasing power...It was the policy and responsibility of the federal government to foster and promote free competitive enterprise...to create conditions under which there will be afforded useful employment for those able, willing, and seeking work.²³

The fear of a severe economic downturn proved unfounded, however, as average real GNP growth between 1948 and 1959 exceeded 3 percent per year. Therefore, attracting and retaining qualified workers in a strong and highly competitive job market became a primary company objective.

Adding to the urgency of achieving this goal was the apparent growing power of labor unions. By the end of the Second World War, union membership stood at 35.5 percent of the industrial workforce, and labor agitation showed no sign of abatement. Between August 15, 1945 and August 14, 1946, there were 4,630 strikes involving five million workers. While corporate pressure led to the passage of the union-restricting Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, this was not enough to halt unionization efforts. To attract workers, organized labor turned a significant portion of its attention to securing worker benefits, including pensions and healthcare insurance. To counteract such union efforts, companies rapidly improved their benefits. They also extended these job perks to all their workers because they enhanced their corporate images, increased worker identity with their firms, and enhanced productivity. By 1960, the nation's largest employers offered hospitalization, vision plans, old age pensions, profit-sharing, and numerous educational and recreational activities for their workers and their families. Given the new attention paid to family benefits, it was no wonder that the wives of employees appeared on the radar screens of many corporate leaders during the 1950s.²⁴

Satisfying the needs of employees and their families through such means as providing fringe benefits did more than enhance employee recruitment and retention and limit unionization. They signified the adoption of best managerial practice. Many of the large corporate entities that emerged between 1880 and 1920 adopted the principles of systematic, or what others termed scientific, management. The practitioners of systematic management believed that they could reduce management to a series of principles and

theories drawn from psychology, biology, sociology, and economics. Operating their large firms effectively and efficiently entailed forecasting, planning, screening, measurement, and a focus on the functions performed, not the performers. This emphasis on function grew out of their belief that humans were adaptable; they just needed incentives to perform the tasks assigned to them.²⁵

By the 1930s, however, a new construct of organizational theory had emerged, namely the Human Relations School. Employing the findings of the study conducted by Fritz Roethlisberger at the Hawthorne Works of the Western Electric Company in Chicago and their own research and observations, the most widely-read proponents of the human relations approach, Elton Mayo and Chester Barnard argued that performance and not just function mattered and that cooperation took precedence over obedience.²⁶

The social upheaval evident in the 1930s and early 1940s in Stalinist Russia, the rise and spread of fascism in Europe, and labor unrest in the United States greatly concerned Elton Mayo. He believed that solving these ills required a new administrative approach.²⁷ For an organization to function well and achieve its goals, its members first needed a sense of belonging. What made communism, socialism, and Marxism so appealing was that they generated a sense of human solidarity.²⁸ Leaders could more readily meet their objectives by fostering trust and cooperation among and from their subordinates rather than demanding obedience. As to the means administrators had to use to build such trust and cooperation, they had to satisfy the material and economic needs of not just individuals but the formal and informal groups that existed within their organizations.²⁹

Mayo and Chester Barnard both argued that intelligent understanding and active cooperation were vital to any civilized order and activity. Any successful organization had to be “effective” in that it accomplished the objectives of its system and “efficient” in that it satisfied individual motives.³⁰ Barnard went further than Mayo in noting that individual objectives were not solely economic goals; many were non-monetary, such as the acquisition of prestige and status, the ability to be a vital part of something bigger than oneself, and a sense of belonging and comradeship. If individual desires were satisfied to some degree, then employees would surrender control and submit to authority. Without such satisfaction, officials could only achieve their objectives through coercion and deception.³¹ Since needs varied among individuals and groups, conflict was natural and inherent in any organization. The successful executive recognized this and therefore provided a system of effective communication among all members and all levels of the organization.³² Moreover, the successful leader maintained the willingness of employees/subordinates to cooperate, as they ensured the continuity and integrity of organizational purpose.³³

Although operations research, a new variant of systematic/scientific management emerged out of World War II and found favor in defense industries, the human relations school remained dominant in other economic sectors.³⁴ More importantly, this managerial framework began to undergo a transformation that made individual workers, the satisfaction of their unique needs, and “shared governance” even more critical components of good corporate practice by the 1960s.

40 Douglas M. McGregor, Sloan Professor of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, outlined this new managerial approach in his address at the school’s Fifth

Anniversary Convocation in April 1957. Based in part on the hierarchy of needs developed by the noted psychologist, Abraham Maslow, McGregor argued that employees were not passive or resistant to organizational needs. Present in employees at every organizational level were motivation, the potential for development, the capacity for assuming responsibility, and the readiness to direct behavior to achieve organizational goals. It was the responsibility of managers to make it possible for people to recognize and develop these traits for themselves. It was essential for them also to arrange organizational conditions and operational methods so that people could achieve their own goals and direct their own efforts toward fulfilling organizational objectives. Supervisory personnel needed to create opportunities, release potential, remove obstacles, encourage growth, and provide guidance. One managed through objectives, not control. This required the decentralization and delegation of authority. Ideally, management was participative and consultative with employees evaluating themselves and setting their own objectives. Because power lay with the employee, and the employee was influenced by those around him, including his family, the corporation could not ignore familial needs, particularly spousal needs.³⁵

By the 1950s, however, spousal needs were changing. Although historians have traditionally placed the emergence of the modern women's rights movement in the 1960s, a number of scholars now argue that the undercurrents of the call for gender equality were readily evident during the late 1940s and 1950s. Two key pieces of evidence that these historians use to substantiate their claims, namely married women's employment rates and the drive for equal pay for equal work, also help explain why company officials openly began discouraging corporate wives from working and grappling with the issue of the "worth" of employee wives. Whereas total female employment climbed steadily between 1900 and 1960, rising from 20.6 percent to 35.1 percent, married women's employment nearly tripled, going from 11.7 percent to 30.6 percent during the same period. Between 1950 and 1960 alone, married women's employment rose from 21.6 percent to 30.6 percent. Even if one examined the trend among the class of women most likely to serve as corporate wives, namely Caucasian married women, the employment rate soared from 9.8 percent in 1930, to 20.7 percent in 1950, and 29.8 percent in 1960.³⁶ This upsurge occurred because of two critical changes. The birthrate during the 1920s and 30s declined so that the traditional source of female labor, young single women, declined significantly in relation to the total population. Whereas single adult females aged sixteen to twenty-four comprised 21 percent of the population in 1900, the percentage dropped to 11 percent in 1950. Further limiting this traditional labor supply was that more young women were attending school. While 28 percent of those aged sixteen to twenty-one were in school in 1900, the number rose to 38 percent in 1950 and 47 percent in 1960. To compensate for the lack of young, single female workers, employers turned to married women, particularly those without children or those with children in the upper grades of school.³⁷

As the number of female employees rose, so did the call for equal pay for equal work. The battle for equal pay had a long history by 1950. Although it began in 1898, only Michigan and Montana had enacted equal pay laws by 1919. Therefore during the 1920s, the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor and the National Women's Party fought for the passage of a national equal pay law. Although their efforts subsided during the

1930s and early 1940s, as the Second World War drew to a close, the Women's Bureau formed the National Equal Pay Commission, and Senators Claude Pepper and Wayne Morse introduced an equal pay bill in Congress arguing that:

inequatable compensation based on sex was an unfair wage practice that led to labor disputes, depressed all employers' wages and living standards, prevented maximum utilization of productive capacities in war and peace, and endangered national security and general welfare.³⁸

Just as Congressional hearings on the Pepper-Morse bill failed to bring the issue to a floor vote, similar hearings in 1948 and 1950 also ended in committees defeating equal pay proposals. Therefore in 1952, equal pay advocates organized the National Conference on Equal Pay. Although making no progress on the national level, participants could claim some success because, by 1955, sixteen states and the territory of Alaska had enacted equal pay laws.³⁹

While company officials openly opposed equal pay and married women's employment, they embraced other key aspects of women's subtly changing societal roles. Development of social and educational programs for corporate wives as well as the encouragement of the women's civic involvement neatly coincided with the desires expressed by numerous women during the 1940s and 50s. In 1943, sociologist Joseph Lundberg noted the increased yearning for personal freedom and higher standards of living among contemporary women and commented that these longings conflicted with traditional marital expectations. "Our present marriage system conflicts with present-day women's desires for personal freedom and higher standards of living more than it does with these same desires in men...they may more often be in collision with marital duties."⁴⁰ His collaborator, Marion Bassett, observed that women were calling for more varied lives. Reporting the findings of a survey she conducted among 128 young mothers, she noted that 70 percent of them wanted men and children to assume greater portions of domestic tasks. Half of them desired greater participation in community, political, consumer, and educational organizations. Half also wanted more time to pursue a particular field of study or area of interest. Anticipating the feminists of the 1960s, Bassett challenged the notion that women had to choose between home and work and called for additional part-time work and higher educational opportunities, particularly for women with young children.⁴¹

In 1947, psychiatrists Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnham also noted that women were dissatisfied with their traditional roles. Women no longer saw themselves as successful if they were happily married, rearing healthy children, and efficiently and effectively running their households. They wanted more: a job, their own money, more civic involvement, and greater educational opportunities.⁴² According to Lundberg and Farnham this situation needed immediate rectification because "contemporary women in very large numbers are psychologically disordered and that their disorder is having terrible social and personal effects involving men in all departments of their lives as well as women."⁴³ Rather than supporting women in their demands for greater roles, as Folsom and Bassett had done, they argued that society just needed to make women feel

more valued about completing their domestic duties.⁴⁴

Despite the admonitions of Lundberg and Farnham, women's dissatisfaction with merely fulfilling their domestic duties continued into the 1950s. As noted by Joanne Meyerowitz after examining popular publications of the period: "Domestic ideals coexisted in ongoing tension with an ethos of individual achievement that celebrated non-domestic activity, individual striving, public service, and public success."⁴⁵ While women continued to manage their households, they sought out ways to relive their isolation and to make housework and childrearing less tedious and exhausting. To increase personal satisfaction and their sense of personal achievement, they pursued recreational, civic, and educational opportunities and part-time work. At the height of the Cold War, many also insisted that democracy required their political involvement. These beliefs and desires fit well with corporate encouragement of increased civic involvement of the part of corporate wives and the formulation of special programs for employee spouses.⁴⁶

Such programs only came about because company officials recognized the social capital inherent in the wives of their managers. While the aforementioned factors underlay companies' recognition of the contributions wives could make in the careers of their husbands and the success of the firms that employed them, other factors would soon attempt to shape business officials' views and treatment of wives. With the women's movement of the 1960s and 70s, managerial wives became less complacent and compliant, and a number also became full-time employees. A decade later, managers could no longer speak of corporate wives. The term became corporate spouse as an ever-growing number of women entered the managerial ranks. Finally as the twentieth century drew to a close, wives became viewed as potential financial liabilities, rather than assets, as courts awarded women divorcing their executive husbands millions of dollars because they had been such good corporate wives. By then, however, it was too late for executives to undo what they had done decades earlier. Similar to opening Pandora's box, after discovering the social capital inherent in corporate wives during the 1950s, they could not turn back.

NOTES

1. James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1990), 302-312.
2. Pamela Walker Laird, *Pull: Networking and Success since Benjamin Franklin* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006); Jocelyn Wills, "Respectable Mediocrity: The Everyday Life of an Ordinary American Striver, 1876-1890," *Journal of Social History* 37 (Winter 2003): 323-349; Christiane Diehl Taylor, "The Silent Partner: Mary Mehagan Hill and the Great Northern Railway," *Essays in Economic and Business History* 24 (2006): 34-47.
3. Mary Hill Diaries, 1886-1887, 1889, 1891-1892, 1894-1895, 1897, 1900-1914, Louis J. Hill Papers, James J. Hill Reference Library, St. Paul, Minnesota; Mary Hill Diaries, 1884-1885, 1888, 1892, 1913-1921, Manuscript Collection, P 2210, James J. Hill and Family Papers: 1885-1960, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota. For extended discussion of Mary Hill's role as a corporate wife see: Taylor, "The Silent Partner."

4. *St. Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch*, 22 November 1921.
5. Data developed by author from articles reviewed after identification through *Poole's Index to Periodical Literature* (1880-1905) and the *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature* (1900-1999).
6. *Internet Movie Data Base*, www.IMDB.com (accessed April 2006).
7. Data developed by author from articles reviewed after identification through *Industrial Arts Index* (1914-1945), *Poole's Index to Periodical Literature* (1880-1905), and *The Readers Guide to Periodical Literature* (1900-1945).
8. *Anonymous*: "This Hullabaloo Over Executives' Wives," *American Business*, August 1957, 12.
9. Data developed by author from articles reviewed after identification through *Industrial Arts Index* (1946-1957), *Business Periodical Index* (1958-1979) and the *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature* (1946-1979).
10. W. Lloyd Warner and James C Abegglen, "Successful Wives of Successful Executives," *Harvard Business Review* 34 (March/April 1956): 64.
11. Warner and Abegglen; E.M. Ryan, "Executive Wives in a Growing Business," *American Business*, July 1957, 14.
12. William H. Whyte Jr., "The Wives of Management," *Fortune*, October 1951, 86-88, 204-213; "The Corporation and the Wife," *Fortune*, November 1951, 109-111.
13. *Anonymous*: "This Hullabaloo Over Executives' Wives," 12.
14. William H. Whyte Jr., "The Wives of Management," *Fortune*, October 1951, 86-88, 204-213; "The Corporation and the Wife," *Fortune*, November 1951, 109-111; Laurence A. Appley, "Wife, Home Greatly Affect Personnel Man's Progress," *Personnel Journal* 32 (May 1953): 10-14; Abegglen and Ryan, 12-14; *Anonymous*: "This Hullabaloo Over Executives' Wives," 40; *Anonymous*: "Help Your Husband Get Ahead," *Changing Times*, November 1957, 41; C.F. Johnson, "When the Boss's Wife Should Have Stayed Home," *American Business*, August 1958.
15. Whyte, "The Wives of Management," 86.
16. Whyte, "The Corporation and the Wife," 109-111.
17. *Ibid*, 150 - 158 (quotation 150).
18. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Series F 192-109, National Income, by Sector and Legal Form of Organization, 1929-1970," *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 237.
19. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Selected General Statistics for Operating Manufacturing Establishments, Classified as to Size by Number of Employees, for Major Industry Groups and Selected Industries, 1950-1947," *Annual Survey of Manufactures: 1949 and 1950* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952), 116-117.
20. Internal John Deere and Rockwell International personnel policy manuals and memos in possession of author; John Callahan, former Operations Director, IBM plant, Rochester, Minnesota, interview with author, Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 2006.
21. Former wife of a Honeywell Engineering and Sales Director, Honeywell Headquarters, Minneapolis, Minnesota, interview with author, Indianapolis, Indiana, March 2005.

Despite being divorced from her first husband for twenty years, the interviewee remained the good corporate wife. She only agreed to be interviewed if she remained anonymous, for what she revealed might have an effect on the success of her former husband's current business venture. Although he no longer worked for Honeywell, he relied on the networks that he had built while employed there.

22. Mansel G. Blackford and K. Austin Kerr, *Business Enterprise in American History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), 352-355; Whyte, "The Corporation and the Wife," 152.
23. Samuel Rosenberg, *American Economic Development Since 1945* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 43-55.
24. Rosenberg, 43-79; Sanford M. Jacoby, *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism Since the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 216-250.
25. H.A. Overstreet, O.W. Caldwell, Thomas Nixon Carver, Mary P. Follett, Harlow S. Person, and Henry Dennison, *Scientific Foundations of Business Administration* (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins Company, 1926); The Taylor Society, *Scientific Management in American Industry*, ed. Harlow S. Person (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1929), 23-32
26. Elton Mayo, *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization* (New York: McMillan Company, 1933; reprint, Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer Company, 1986), 177-183. Mayo and Barnard represented the pairing of a business academic with a business practitioner in that Elton Mayo served as the professor of Industrial Research at the Graduate School of Business at Harvard, and Chester Barnard was the former president of the New Jersey Bell Telephone Company and then an executive with American Telephone and Telegraph.
27. Elton Mayo, *The Social Problems of an Industrial Organization* (Boston: Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration, 1945), ix.
28. *Ibid*, 10.
29. *Ibid*, 84-100.
30. *Ibid*, 53; Chester I. Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1938, 30th anniversary edition, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1968), vii-viii.
31. Barnard, 40-60.
32. *Ibid*, 82-163.
33. *Ibid*, 215-232.
34. Herbert Solow in his article, "Operations Research," which appeared in the April 1951 issue of *Fortune* defined the new field as: "The application of scientific methods to the study of large complex organizations or activities in order to give executives a quantitative basis for decisions." (106). He also noted that the key methods employed by operations research practitioners included motion studies, market research, and quality control. Yet in the same piece, he acknowledged that there were other factors critical in management decisions that were not in the realm of operations research such as personalities, ethics, morale, style, and taste. (106) These were all considerations more familiar to human relations theorists.
35. Douglas M. McGregor, "The Human Side of Enterprise," *Management Review*, November 1957, 321-323.

36. U.S. Department of Commerce , Bureau of the Census, "Series D 182-232, Major Occupation Group of Experienced Civilian Labor Force, by Sex, 1900-1970," *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*, 140; Claudia Golden, "Table 6.4," *Understanding the Gender Gap: Economic History of American Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 175-176.
37. Claudia Gold, "Table 2.1," *Understanding the Gender Gap*, 17.
38. Alice Kessler-Harris, *A Woman's Wage: Historical Meanings and Social Consequences* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1990), 101.
39. *Ibid*, 83-102.
40. Joseph Kirk Folsom, in collaboration with Marion Bassett, *The Family and Democratic Society* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1943), 433.
41. *Ibid*, 587-617.
42. Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnham, M.D., *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), v.-15.
43. *Ibid*, 90-126.
44. *Ibid*, 202- 234.
45. Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Post-War Mass Culture, 1946-1958," *The Journal of American History* 79 (March 1993): 1458.
46. *Ibid*, 1459-1470.