

Evolution of the female roles in the US (Case study: The Hollywood movies in the late 1970s and early 1980s)

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Abstract: Prior to the 1980s, numerous charges of discrimination were noteworthy among women in Hollywood. In those years, women were in uncertain situations, so they seemed aimless and vulnerable. In the period that this article focuses on, the female characters are or have become intelligent and therefore open-minded and potentially independent. Although, they are still vulnerable and unsure of themselves in the new environment created by feminism. The main question this paper seeks to answer is how the change of women's roles in America was depicted and how it can be explained through feminism. Through the use of cultural and media studies, it would be concluded that the Hollywood descriptions of the women of 1980s are the women who have been highlighted out of their previously uncertain situations. A number of movies for that specific decade have been studied and the results have been used to prove the claims.

Keywords: culture and media studies, female, feminism, Hollywood, movies.

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Introduction

Hollywood attracts considerable attention and has "a disproportional impact on American (and perhaps world) culture" (Eliashberg, Elbers & Leenders, 2006, p. 638). Therefore, there are lots of people in the world that attach themselves to Hollywood movie stars. The changing behavior of these stars through the movies will surely have effects on the behavior of the people in society (Greenwood, Pietromonaco & Long, 2008). Actually, for more than 80 years, Hollywood has dominated the production of media images that appeal to the widest audiences. By the time the studio system became firmly established in the 1930s, filmmaking had become centralized and classified. As in other industrial settings, men soon dominated the most important positions on both the business and creative aspects. By the end of the decade, many women were employed in low-level jobs such as script clerk, but they accounted for no more than 15% of screenwriters and other prominent male-dominated jobs in the US movie industry. Today, men still outnumber women by more than four to one among those writing feature films and by nearly three to one among those writing for television – to give an example for one sector (Bielby & Bielby, 2002, pp. 21-26).

Talking about the situation of women in Hollywood and the bias against them, this analysis brings together narrative theory, film analysis, and historical studies on the dynamics and social/medial representation of gender identity, and seeks to explore how cinema both represents and builds social desires and lifestyles and how it represents women. It foregrounds the influence employed by cinema (as the dominant form of entertainment in the classical period and even now) on the viewer as a subject who "in the movie theatre lives in a more intense and structured way existential models and possible routes of their own identity". It also argues that a gendered spectator's manner of treatment, changes over time, as cinema activates different cognitive and emotional dynamics. Representations of desires, identities and inter-subjective relationships constantly change, especially with regard to masculine/feminine relations. At the same time, the styles of "mise-en-scène", the techniques and forms of cinematic narration, and the quality of the image also evolve, producing different views of the subject (Bono & Buonauro, 2010, p. 431). Meanwhile

the changes and evolvments might have had special effects on the portrayal of women in American society through their movie industry.

It is worth noting that some of the common biases of gender discrimination in Hollywood existed even on some other aspects as some of its important ones we might refer to wage gaps between actors and actresses. The average earnings per film of female movie stars increase until the age of 34 but decrease rapidly thereafter. Male movie stars' average earnings per film reach the maximum at age 51 and remain stable after that (De Pater, Judge & Scott, 2014, p. 407). After all, the analysis is going to focus on the change of actresses' roles in Hollywood.

Literature review

According to Andersen, the 1950s had been a time of crisis for the movie industry, with cinema attendance plummeting mainly because of the spread of television; therefore, some studios started making films for teenagers. In reaction to this crisis, AIP had been the first studio to capitalize exclusively on teenage audiences (Andersen, 2014, p. 2). Consequently, because of these changes in the studios policies, movies dealing with the interest of teenage audiences became much more prominent in the following years of that decade. As an example, one can refer to enormously popular series like Star Wars for which the trend has been continued up to recent times and just currently the sixth one is going to be produced. Although in those series we see women being shown more actively, but the first three ones are all masculine movies paying more attention to actors' roles rather than actresses.

Regarding the gender discrimination existed within Hollywood, it can be noticed that according to Lane and Helford, between 1949 and 1979, she points out, only 0.2% of Hollywood films (one in five hundred) were directed by women. Although the ratio of male to female directors is still heavily one-sided (as recently as 1990, only 5.6% of Hollywood productions were directed by women), Lane feels able to state, at the start of the 21st century, that women directors' movies and mainstream films with feminist points of view are being distributed at a higher rate than twenty years ago' (McNair, 2002, p. 139).

On the other hand, following what has been mentioned on gender biases, in their article on Hollywood script writers, Bielbys had raised an important question about the racial and gender discriminations in Hollywood. The discrimination they have discussed is totally initiative as it starts from the burst of a movie being produced somehow it narrates the things going on behind the curtain. According to their claims, it turns out that mostly young white men are creating the initial basis of a movie in Hollywood. White men write about three-fourths of the scripts for Hollywood feature films and television series (Bielby & Bielby, 2002, p. 21). Therefore, it is justifiable to say that there is no country for old men as well as all ladies!

One of the most relevant and well-written books related to this research is Veronica Pravadelli's book. Pravadelli's book examines the changes in the narrative forms and techniques of American 'classical' cinema (1930s-1960s), clearly demonstrating the utility – perhaps even the necessity – of a gender-transformed approach for a comprehensive understanding of some basic issues in cinema history. In doing so, it engages with the full range of relevant literature (Bono & Buonauro, 2010, p. 431). She mentions that female roles in America as actresses and maybe in other fields were something of a static position.

In her book *Vanishing Women: Magic, Film and Feminism* Beckman's study is a welcome entry into the field of feminist film theory and its broad concerns with questions of spectatorship and female representation. The author's aim is to consider analytically the vanishing woman and the questions raised by the phenomenon in relation to feminist agency and cinematic spectatorship. Using a diverse range of cultural objects including popular film and mystic photography, she traces the appearance of the vanishing woman at key historical moments – the birth of cinema, the eve of World War II – arguing that the figure functions as a site where socio-political concerns may be worked through. Beckman claims that the condition of vanishing/returning opens up a space for feminist resistance; it avoids "the perils of total presence and the powerlessness of utter absence" (Beckman, 2003, p. 15). However, she cautions that the reappearance of the white female body may be at the expense of the suppression of 'other' bodies. Despite these limitations, the spectacle of vanishing "provokes ... a heightened state of visual awareness" that raises questions about

spectatorship and gendered subjectivity (Beckman, 2003, p. 190). Hollywood up to late sixties was not only a scene for gender discrimination but the harsher one was against minorities considered as others. Following the discussion for the case of America, after the catastrophic years of WWII, it can be said that if America was to export the democracy of attraction into post-war, deprived Europe, the movies could be its shop window American actresses, with their all American features and streamlined sexuality came to exemplify in a single image this complex interface of the economic, the political, and the erotic. By the mid-1950s, they stayed for a brand of classless glamour, available to anyone using American cosmetics, nylons and peroxide (Mulvey, 1996, p. 216). The hysteria consideration of the women which had been started offhand flourished in the form of women's usages as means of any kind of advertisement as well as propaganda.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that in her article *Hollywood: Doesn't Threaten Family Values*, Sternheimer (2008) discussing the American society of 1970s and the position of women and family in that era, has mentioned that in spite of the fact that divorce rates started their climb shortly after World War II, movies and television programs mostly retreated from the topic. It is telling that television's most popular blended family of the 1970s, *The Brady Bunch*, was the product of the death of spouses, not divorce (Sternheimer, 2008, p. 47). These were some of the changes in the women's roles in Hollywood as well as America's sphere asserted by the body of literature.

Theoretical framework

Analysts of Hollywood features demonstrate that they follow principles of character-driven drama, despite a common belief that action films are mostly spectacle and light on character-centered plotting. Conversely, successful Hollywood films break stories into acts that emphasize character behaviors (King, 2008, p. 244). Therefore, in analyzing the movies, a significant amount of attention has to be paid to the inner characters as a part of character theory.

On the other hand, possibly the most visible critical discourse on women actors appears in the variety of attitudes known as cultural and media studies, within which we can include television studies, film studies, gender

studies and those not working within such formal limitations. The appearance of these regulations in recent years has demonstrated the significance of film and television in the distribution of particular representations of women, and the role of these illustrations both in reproducing and possibly in challenging predominant notions of gender. Critical studies have focused on the partiality of dominant representations of gender, of women's roles and bodies and of the valorization of particular types of activity as appropriate as 'feminine'. In demonstrating the cultural, historical and political location of these images and the marginalization they are complicit with, cultural and media studies have an important influence, at least in academic and educational circles, in exposing and revealing the role of film and television in the reproduction of masculine ideologies. While there is clearly much value in such critical activity, there are issues with the specificity of the focus of the work done in cultural and media studies. In short, cultural and media studies have tended to focus on representations of women in film and television. Although this is certainly of central importance, too often the focus on representation has dominated the analysis of other moments in cultural production. The problem, to put it directly, is that despite their many values, cultural and media studies do not seem particularly well adjusted to questions of the production of representations of women, preferring to focus on the way that representations of women in film and television are used in the cinema and the living room (Dean & Jones, 2003, pp. 527-8).

Talking about women's roles, feminism theories cannot be put aside. Much feminist cultural theory has viewed popular cinema and TV as standard products of the 'male gaze'. The concern of critical practice informed by this perspective has been to identify the textual and structural mechanisms by which patriarchal ideology is reproduced. 'Authentically' feminist film and TV has been seen to exist beyond the popular, in the avant-garde and independent production sectors where the institutional sexism of the mainstream media industries is less pronounced. We are now witnessing a paradigm shift, however, which reflects real improvements in the material conditions of women in patriarchy, and the penetration of feminist ideology into all areas of culture, including its most commercial sectors (McNair, 2002, p. 139).

According to Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1988), prior to 1990s not only in America's society but all in all women were excluded from being active in their societies. She shows in her history of public speech, women were actively excluded from achieving fame not only because of their informal and social position as private persons, but also because of strong restrictions on their speech (Jamieson, 1988, p. 68). Veronica Pravadelli in her book about the changing role of the women in Hollywood analyses the early 1930s of America, with stories about feminine liberation linked with the 'New Woman', a central figure in the collective imagination at the beginning of the 20th century, who represented the very essence of metropolitan modernity. This is the transitional period of sound cinema, a pre-classical stage still characterized by a remarkable measure of visual dynamism, followed during the second half of the 1930s by a "rational invisible mise-en-scène", whose visual sobriety supports the centrality of logically constructed plots. It is the peak of the classical style, located between the releases of two important movies, *It Happened One Night* (F. Capra, 1934) and *Stagecoach* (J. Ford, 1939), both masterfully interpreting the principle of narrative linearity into images, thanks to their 'diegesis' about journeys. Following the changes happened in the identities of the Americans after 1930s, new identity definitions had been in process in the forties. Order, rationality – and the confirmation of traditional moral codes – also dominate the social scene of Roosevelt's New Deal; "the New Woman must give up her ambitions", while in the collective imaginary the figure of the "strong man" makes its come back in 'biopics and adventure movies'. Even odd comedies, seemingly presenting a conflict of equals, are in fact driven by the necessity of a final resolution respectful of social norms. While war movies unavoidably dominate the early 1940s, they are also marked by the emergence of two new genres, especially important in the second half of the decade: the noir and the woman's film, with a new connection between social imaginary and techniques of the mise-en-scène, and a subject split between desire and social integration. Alternating and combining textual and contextual analysis, Pravadelli questions the tracks of desire and the conceptualizations of identity staged in these two genres, both formally characterized by the use of flashbacks and the voice over, underlining the centrality – and the partiality – of a subjective point of view, respectively masculine in the former

and feminine in the latter case. Using innovative devices (such as deep focus) and a psychoanalytic perspective, noirs and woman's films describe characters always in the grip of their unconscious desire; at the same time, more advanced technologies visually underline the new centrality of the human body in the processes of sense production, with the emergence of an 'embodied subjectivity' quite removed from the typical characters of 1930s movies, who were functional to the development of action in the plot (Bono & Buonauro, 2010, pp. 432-3). After World War II, America enters a cold war with Soviet Union and in Hollywood, the focus had been on families and the concept of the nuclear family.

Regarding the different aspects of feminism in cinema, we can say that feminist theorizations of film authorship began with radical political concerns about women's limited presence in (or routine absence from) the male-dominated cultural sphere (Grant, 2001, pp. 115-116). In the context of a successful consumer culture and its American dream, family melodramas enlighten the frustrations and disillusionments that an imaginary centered on the idealized suburban family can also engender in the subject, torn between personal desire and socially imposed desire. Looked at from this perspective, technological innovations such as Cinemascope and Technicolor open up new modes of visually representing issues about the body and sexuality, in a trajectory that parallels a 'diegesis' which achieves only a fragile, perhaps untruthful resolution: like an irrepressible symptom, style and its excesses disclose what the story hides. They seem to have the purpose of revealing ideology, as a sort of counter-cinema which uses stylistic and expressive codes to call into question the formal project of 'classical' cinema; attraction seems to prevail over narration, and the use of melodrama reveals its 'anticlassical status' (Bono & Buonauro, 2010, p. 433).

In this study, we draw on the theoretical vocabulary established by feminist scholars of gender to contextualize the Hollywood depiction of the change of the role of women in American society. With Butler (1993), we understand gender as a performative reiteration of discursive norms that proceeds and shape the gendered subject. As Teresa de Lauretis (1987, 5) has first emphasized, modern mass media – and especially film – have a central significance for the construction of gender ideals, because "the construction of gender is both the product and the process of its

representation". As Connell and James W. Messerschmidt have recently reminded us, "hegemony works in part through the production of exemplars of masculinity ..., symbols that have authority despite the fact that most men and boys do not fully live up to them" (Messerschmidt & Connell, 2005, p. 846).

Women in American society

Women were actively excluded from achieving fame not only because of their informal and social position as private persons, but also because of vigorous restrictions on their speech. Jamieson goes through a variety of material and discursive means that were used to silence women: ducking stools, gagging and the gossip's bridle were all physical measures exercised in public to enforce women's silence: "Long after ducking stools and gossip bridles had become curiosities in museums, the silence they enforced and the warnings they imposed continued to haunt women" (Zoonen, 2008, p. 290).

When discussing American society, it should also be added that in the years following the war, the average age for marriage fell to 20. By 1951, one in three women married by age 19, and by 1958, more women married between the ages of 15 and 19 than at any other age category (Riley, 1986, p. 122). The idealized family form of the mid-20th century – a household with a biological father and stay-at-home-mother – was itself an incongruity. Prior to that time, many recombinant families formed due to the death of a parent. Following World War II, the vast expansion of suburbs coupled with GI Bill benefits (predominantly available only to white men) made housing very affordable. Many of these men had financial opportunities their parents didn't (and their grandchildren wouldn't). The economic boom meant wages were high enough for a single earner, even a working-class worker, to support a household.

This changed in the 1970s with the rise in inflation. Workers' real wages started to decline, making a second income more of a necessity. Women's labor force participation had been rising throughout the 20th century, but between 1970 and 1990 jumped from 43% to 58% and continued to creep up through the 1990s. Divorce rates also increased significantly between 1970 and 1980, from 3.5 divorces per thousand to 5.2 per thousand. Remaining in an unhappy marriage was all but a given for women until they

had more opportunities to support themselves. Most women had difficulty obtaining credit in their own name until 1975, when creditors no longer required a male cosigner. In 1970, women earned approximately 60 cents for every dollar men earned (Sternheimer, 2008, p. 47).

Many events that took place in the 20th century advanced women's participation in all aspects of society. In 1920, American women won the right to vote, and the *Equal Pay Act* of 1963 banished separate pay scales for men and women in the same jobs. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 illegitimized discrimination on the basis of sex (as well as race, color, religion, and national origin) and banned discrimination in hiring, salary, and promotion, to open up male dominated jobs to women (De Pater, Judge & Scott, 2014, p. 407).

Since the 1970s, men's real wages have declined, making marriage less economically possible for many. While more upper-income women choose to become single mothers, as some celebrities have, the vast majority of mothers who never marry are low earners. Of course, women of all income levels sometimes become single mothers by chance, not choice (Sternheimer, 2008, p. 46). Acceptance of divorce became more common in American culture following the legal changes after 1975, changes that are often depicted within popular culture (Sternheimer, 2008, p. 47).

Women in Hollywood

According to the justification of indicating prior researches, women learn gender-appropriate behaviors from movies identify with female characters and develop "parasocial relationships" with female characters to construct meanings about themselves (Dozier & Lauzen, 1999, p. 357). During late 1930s, vanishing of women in the movies has a political aspect. It allows the public to accept violence because it is represented as unbelievable; the woman always returns. This act of political vanishing is, for example, exposed by Hitchcock's use of self-conscious editing techniques in *The Lady Vanishes* (Bell-Williams, 2007, pp. 114-115).

During 1950s, in an era of civil rights movements, decolonization and race rebellion, Hollywood's vision of female sexual desirability was a gleaming white icon (Handyside, 2012, p. 292). Of course on the other

hand, there was a unique form of sexual deviance in the "mutual rescuing" among heroines of the early 1950s (Robinson, 2004, p. 42).

A growing body of research indicates that women working in behind-the-scenes community in the movie industries had influence on the on-screen portrayals of female characters. Since prior to the seventies, there were not many women working in behind-the-scene positions especially in the film industries, therefore it seems obvious why they did not have a dominant role in the movies (Dozier & Lauzen, 1999, p. 358).

Statistical evidence published in the mid-1980s, documenting systematic barriers faced by women and writers of color, provided the motivation for constituencies within the Writers Guild of America (WGA) and civil rights groups to dismantle discrimination in Hollywood. Yet the most recent statistics show little improvement for women and writers of color, and a rapidly declining situation for these discriminated groups in the biggest movie industry in the world. Furthermore, they mention in the clubby, a male-dominated world of executives, that male writers are insiders. As a result, they are better known and are often perceived as better risks than equally successful female writers. In the United States, writing is one of the few professions where women have achieved equality with men, at least in terms of participation. By 1990, women accounted for 50% of authors, 50% of technical writers, and 51% of editors and reporters, according to census statistics. Factors favoring women's participation seem to be present in Hollywood as well (Bielby & Bielby, 2002, pp. 21-26).

Prior to 1980s, men were more likely than women to get long-term development deals and multiple project commitments. Pro-male bias in the industry generates a pattern of increasing advantage whereby women fall further behind than their male counterparts during the course of a career (Bielby & Bielby, 2002, p. 27). On the other hand, the image of women in the cinema has been an image created by men. The emergent women's cinema has begun the transformation of that image. These notes explore ideas and strategies developed in women's films (Johnston, 1973, pp. 24-31).

Feminism has been linked to women's violence in U.S. media for decades. The most recent upturn for both began in the early 1970s, with the rise of "heroines of Blaxploitation" and horror films, and the 1972 appearance of "Wonder Woman" on the first cover of *Ms*. The trend accelerated in the early

1990s, when the release of *Thelma and Louise* created a minor furor over depictions of women's defiance (King, 2006, p. 422).

Hollywood of 70's and 80's, the era's significance

During 1970s, the films of the period constitute a dialogue or debate about the nature and the prospects of American society. On the other hand, one of the most controversial ideas of the 1970s was feminism: the idea that women were discriminated against in both Western and non-Western societies and that gender roles needed to be first analyzed and then reshaped by social and political processes. Feminism was an important force in the arts, in the universities, in the workplace, in the political arena. Surprisingly, little of this debate found its way to the Hollywood film industry. Most of the key films of the early 1970s, whether radical or conservative, are overwhelmingly about the problems of men (consider *Easy Rider*, *Midnight Cowboy*, *The Godfather*, *The French Connection*, *Dirty Harry*, *Jaws*). Although at the end of the decade, we see both strongly feminist and strongly anti-feminist films. But there is no great feminist director and no great feminist masterpiece in the American film industry of the 1970s. Hollywood seems to have resisted this strand of social change (Lev, 2000, p. xi, 142). In fact, the social feminism in American society did not find its way through Hollywood until the late seventies and early eighties.

The 1980s significantly transformed the nation's political culture, as it did the Hollywood industry and its products. Today, the United States is an extremely conservative nation, and the turn toward right-wing policies began in the eighties with the administration of Ronald Reagan. Today, Hollywood filmmaking is affected by out-of-control production costs with no ceiling in sight, and these mounting costs, and the industry's turn toward the global film market for its blockbusters, have their origins in the 1980s (Prince, 2007, p. 1).

As it was asserted, prior to this era, there was a vivid gender and racial discrimination in Hollywood movies. Whiteness has multiple connotations: the white race, figured as the most civilized and advanced of all races; white goods, the products filling the suburban homes of the 1950s US (and France); and cleanliness, both in the white color of detergent and washing powder, and in its metaphorical connotations of sexual purity and virginity.

White women were presented as the most desirable of all women, and blondes– ‘the most white’ – as the most desirable of all (Handyside, 2012, p. 292).

Various quantitative studies have found that women comprise approximately 25% to 36% of all characters in movies. In a sample of 100 top grossing movies from 1940s through 1980s, it has been found that only 36% of all characters were women. Actually according to various researches conducted for that era, female characters accounted 25% of all characters in a sample of movies from 1946 to 1955, 26% of characters in the movies of 1956 to 1965, and from 1966 to 1975 they have played only 28% of all movie characters (Dozier & Lauzen, 1999, p. 359).

Change in the female’s roles

Research on different feminisms focused on changing the structure of patriarchal societies in order to end the repression of women and other minorities, which in the 1970s experienced a theoretical transformation into film studies (Chaudhuri, 2006, pp. 1-2). In this context, the accomplishments of feminist film theorists were of great importance. But what seems to have been overlooked by both the British and the American traditions of feminist film critiques were the ‘real’ women (Dhaenens, Van Bauwel & Bil, 2008, p. 337). In fact, 1970s were not a particularly good decade for women, at least off-screen. They were still doing most of the housework and childcare, and those who held jobs earned an average of 41% less than their male counterparts. Onscreen, however, certain films reflected the strides women had made in the previous decade. This is while the most popular films conventionally appealed to the fifteen- to twenty-five-year-old white male demographic, and well-known directors released significant films that did not particularly stand out for their portrayal of independent women (Rapf, 2007, p. 24). From here on by using the mentioned theories, we are going to examine the Hollywood produced movies which highlight the role of women through society.

***Coal Miner’s Daughter*; Depicting a woman’s independence**

In *Coal Miner’s Daughter* “no matter what kind of music they sang, the country female vocalists were often tough-minded and independent business

women. These female characters were all strong role models who warmed feminist hearts". In *Coal Miner's Daughter*, Loretta Lynn (starring Sissy Spacek) grows from a timid girl in a poor Kentucky coal mining family who at the age of thirteen marries an oppressing man, soon becomes an overworked teenage mother, and eventually ends up a strong, self-assured country music star. For this to happen, her husband, Doolittle 'Mooney' Lynn – also known as 'Doo' – (starring Tommy Lee Jones), must learn to nurture their children and Loretta must learn to stand up for herself. At the end, both Doo and Loretta discover that for their marriage to work, compromise is necessary. *Coal Miner's Daughter* is about how a man must change while how a woman changes through the time.

However, the film is about a woman changing, too. When Doo asks Loretta's father for her hand, her father agrees on two conditions: "Don't hit her" and "Don't take her far from home", Doo does both. The moment Loretta commits to singing is the turning point in the film. It happens on a hill, away from people, in a conversation between her and Doo. She is at her father's grave (the couple has returned to Kentucky for his funeral), and Doo comes up in a noisy bulldozer. Loretta's words explicitly define the theme of the film, finding the meaning of home: "Mommy's moving away; Daddy's gone; I ain't gonna have no home." In a two-shot, Doo tries to comfort her: "You got our home." She rejects the solace and Doo walks out of the frame, leaving her alone. We hear the sound of his bulldozer starting up. In the next shot she joins him and what follows is a long take, a tracking shot that lasts a full minute, going over the terrain with the dozer, as Loretta finally commits: "I want to be a singer, Doo, I want it real bad." No journey to success is easy. In an emotional breakdown, when she can't sing in front of a large Nashville audience of her fans, she tells them that things are "moving too fast in my life; they always have" (Rapf, 2007, pp. 24-25).

An Unmarried Woman; A liberal one

An Unmarried Woman (1978), directed by Paul Mazursky, is the first star vehicle for Jill Clayburgh. It is also one of the first Hollywood films to represent feminist-influenced attitudes toward love, sex, marriage, work, women's friendships, and so on. Clayburgh plays Erica Benton, an upper middle-class wife and mother living in Manhattan, whose husband, Martin

(Michael Murphy), confesses he is in love with a younger woman. Martin moves out, so Erica and her fifteen-year-old daughter, Pattie, are on their own. After a great deal of pain and stress, Erica begins to find her way as an 'unmarried woman'. She meets Saul (Alan Bates), a painter, at the gallery where she works and starts an affair with him. Saul is a wonderful man, yet Erica refuses to spend the summer in Vermont with him. She clings to her independence. *An Unmarried Woman* is a film stressing performances and visuals, not plot. For example, Erica is always doing something. She jogs, ice skates, mimics a ballerina; she walks, takes a cab, goes to lunch, to dinner, to parties; she works, sees a therapist, spends time with friends, and spends time with her kid. Even in the rockiest times, she keeps active and accomplishes a lot. Thus, by the accretion of small details, we get a positive sense of this character. Writer-director Mazursky here shows how a feminist idea can enter into and be softened by middle-class customs (Lev, 2000, pp. 146-147). In this movie the female character is a previously sheltered woman who responds to changed circumstances with surprising strength. Slender, energetic, articulate, she is deeply hurt but not destroyed by her husband's infidelity.

Nine to Five

Nine to Five, from a story by Patricia Resnick, takes 'female resistance to male supremacy' to a farcical extreme. With the Equal Rights Amendment being such a hot issue, *Nine to Five* was timely. It was released in December, after Reagan's election, and it advocated many of the employment reforms that had been campaign topics, such as flex time and job sharing programs, day care in the workplace, and equal opportunity and pay not only for women but for other minorities as well, including the handicapped. In her review of the film, Pauline Kael called it "a slick-package movie as a vehicle for progressive ideas" (Rapf, 2007, p. 33).

Atlantic City

The leading actress in this film is not only strong; she is that rare woman onscreen who is not even 'looking for love' and who remains independent of a male (or even a female) companion at the end as she heads off for Monte Carlo. The changing face of Atlantic City is the dominant metaphor in this

film, with its wrecking balls of destruction and its promise of new construction, its nostalgia for the past and its uncertainty about the future, and ultimately, the unpredictable hand of luck pulling many of the strings. The other side of this metaphor can be taken for granted for the role of the women in this film.

Private Benjamin: Women are not 'Stupid'

The women in films are gaining power onscreen and this film is a good example. The movie begins with a wedding and ends with an un-wedding; the journey in between is one of self-discovery – women's discovery of themselves. After the initial happenings of the movie, the female character enters the army. From this point on, Judy becomes successful in boot camp and her integration into the female community of the army transforms her into a new woman. *Private Benjamin* may be "cuckoo," but the idea of "a reverse Cinderella" is what the new woman in the films of these years is all about. She refuses to be a servant, to be a victim, or to be patronized. She may want "to have it all" (Rapf, 2007, pp. 38-41).

Women in a new social world: The Witches of Eastwick and Kramer vs. Kramer

It's not hard to come up with examples of Hollywood celebrities whose children were born or adopted outside marriages. Until the 1968 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Levy v. Louisiana*, "illegitimate" births could have serious legal and economic consequences. Mothers could lose custody of children born outside of marriage and courts rarely held fathers economically responsible. Once parents and children gained custodial and financial protections, however, illegitimacy lost its legal status. These are the stories dominant in some of the interesting movies of the two decades of seventies and eighties.

Today in the United States, approximately one in three births are to unmarried parents. After 1980s, the births to unmarried mothers rose slightly specially for unmarried women over 20. Notably, the number of babies born to unmarried women over 40 more than doubled during that time, although the vast majority of unmarried mothers are in their 20s and 30s (Sternheimer, 2008, p. 46). While *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979) shows that

males can be caring people, can emerge from their masculine carapaces and learn to love, but all in all and from a feministic perspective, it is a show for women's freedom and change of their role from a simple housewife to a more liberal being in the society. On the other hand, in *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987), Hollywood shows the females' liberty and freedom of choices. In this movie, three women who are each other's close friend, fall in love with the same man, but at the end they reject the man from their privacy even though they have given birth to the man's baby boys.

Conclusion

The eighties was a decade of tremendous change that gave the Hollywood industry and American films its modern shape and form. As the decade ended, the film industry had successfully assimilated the new ancillary markets of home video and cable television and had itself been assimilated into the global communications industry. In the process, the women in American society found a new identity or better to say sound their real identity.

Up to 1980s in America, women were actively excluded from achieving fame not only because of their informal and social position as private persons, but also because of strong restrictions on their speech. During the late 1970s and especially early 1980s, while feminism had already had practical effects on America's society, we can see its representation in the Hollywood movies of that era. As we examined and discussed the above movies, the female characters are intelligent and therefore, freethinking and potentially independent; although they are also vulnerable and unsure of themselves in the new environment brought on by feminism. As a whole, it can be concluded that the Hollywood of 1975 to 1985 has depicted women as female resistance to male supremacy as can be seen in the movie *nine to five*, and also women's journey of self-discovery as in *private Benjamin*, in which they want to prove themselves not as stupid beings, and finally portraying women who do not need men. Furthermore, showing women who can think in a liberal way like the woman in *Kramer vs. Kramer* and also act freely as in *The Witches of Eastwick*. There is also an open stage for further analysis on the change of American women's roles in other decades as well as the change in the portrayals of ethnic women in movies.

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