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DOMESTIC TECHNOLOGY

Domestic technology encompasses a wide range of home appliances and household techniques and practices related to cleaning, cooking, and child care. The development and use of modern domestic technologies was spurred by urbanization and the rise of science. Their proliferation in Western households has significantly affected the organization of the home with implications for race, class, gender, and global stratification.

In the early 1800s, more than 90 percent of the U.S. population lived in rural areas. The preindustrial home was the center of production for daily life. Family members helped with the production of vegetables, bread, clothing, soap, candles, and even medicines. The industrial revolution and urbanization shifted many types of production outside the home. The vacuum in home production generated debate about expectations for home life and women's responsibilities to private and public life. The debates were driven partly by the development of the domestic science movement. A stream of advice manuals and books such as Lydia Maria Child's *American Frugal Housewife* (1828) and Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The American Woman's Home* (1869) became household manuals.

Given the elimination of many home production activities, such feminists as Oliver Schreiner and Charlotte Perkins Gilman advocated that women join men in the public sphere. Yet theirs was radical thought amid the fledgling, yet clearly patriarchal, institutions of postcolonial America. Precolonial and postcolonial America witnessed a growing emphasis on public education and literacy unmatched elsewhere in the world. Yet women's education was legitimized by emphasizing their responsibility in training their sons for entrance into civil society.

The lifework of Ellen Swallow Richards and her commitment to domestic science were a more palatable

match for the given systems of patriarchy. In 1871, Richards became the first female student and then faculty member at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Having trained at Vassar in laboratory techniques then in their infancy, Richards found that her love for science found greater acceptance among men and women when directed toward the female domain of home. Ironically, Richards's focus on the home was more of a concession than a driving vision. She trained secondary education teachers to make a place for herself and other women in science and the academy.

Richards applied laboratory techniques, epidemiology, and germ theory to social problems connected with the home. The American city of the late 1800s was rife with health and safety issues driven by growing urbanization and overcrowding. Richards engineered systemic and home sanitation standards, product testing, food science, ventilation, and hygienic cleaning techniques.

Richards believed that domestic science provided an opportunity to elevate women's status. The care of family and home were not just a vocation, but now a profession based on specialized training. Proper homemaking required formal education in domestic science. As with the rationale for women's literacy in earlier times, the rationale for women's training in the principles of science was legitimized through their responsibility to home life. Cleaning and sanitation became a moral responsibility of every good homemaker.

Although key scientific contributions such as water sanitation, waste management, and immunizations improved public health, many other elements of the domestic science movement contributed to greater social stratification. Domestic education applied "Taylorism," the scientific management techniques used in factories to increase efficiency and production, to home life. Rather than freeing women for leisure or paid work, time "saved" was used to prepare more elaborate meals and scrub floors and walls on a regular basis. The focus on in-home production also created economic opportunity for technological innovation. Yet, many appliances labeled "time saving" actually increased the amount of time that women spent on household labor. "Wash day" became every day, instead of once a month as when laundry was done by hand.

Domestic science home visits became a method for assimilating urban poor families into middle-class American desires, if not luxuries of life. A new sense of order for family was conveyed: family schedules, cleanliness standards, food choice, and food preparation were

framed in the vision of “right living.” Poor women still labored in factories or did piece work in their homes. Material and time resources restricted their ability to conform to middle-class standards. Rising expectations for the ideal home further challenged the moral and feminine identities of the working poor.

Test kitchens such as the “Good Housekeeping Experiment Station,” established in 1900, put the science of food chemistry into corporate practice. Yet, the influence of these kitchens was as much about marketing and sales, with the “Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval,” as it was about science. Photos of female home economists dressed in lab coats in kitchens gave scientific credibility to products such as Corning Ware and helped convince homemakers to use them in their own kitchens.

The influence of the domestic science movement reached beyond women’s in-home labor: it also affected changes in women’s participation in the public sphere. For example, domestic science provided a discourse that allowed women to retain their femininity and accept the new scientific training requirements infused into the field of nursing in the late 19th century.

The foundations of domestic science are retained in home and work organization of modern Western societies. Although men are now more likely to participate in child care responsibilities, women still perform about twice as much routine housework as men do. In all wealthy nations such as the United States, women now represent almost half the paid labor force. Yet middle- and upper-class men and women’s labor force participation is often supported by the home labor of poor and working-class women. Many of these women are immigrants who tend to the housekeeping and child care needs of a family. The home and markers of proper living today exist at the intersections of racial, gender, social class, and global stratification.

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See also Domestic Labor; Education: Gender Differences; Scientific Motherhood

Further Readings

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence—also known as “interpersonal violence,” “battering” and “family violence”—is a widespread and serious public health problem, in the United States and internationally. The United Nations Development Fund for Women estimates that one in three women around the world will be beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her own lifetime. This entry looks at definitions of domestic violence, historical perspectives, domestic violence statistics, causes of batter, effects of domestic violence, children of battered women, and response and prevention.

Definitions

The notion of a “battered woman” derives from the criminal violation known as “battery” or the willful or intentional touching of a person against that person’s will by another person, or by an object or substance put in motion by that other person. The notion of “battered women,” with its emphasis on physical violence, fails to entirely capture the various ways in which intimate partners of either gender can be manipulated and abused and as a consequence, the term has been largely replaced by *domestic violence* (DV), *intimate partner violence* (IPV), and the more generic *family violence*.

During the past 15 years, there has been a growing recognition that IPV is a highly prevalent public health problem with devastating effects on individuals, families, and communities. The term *family violence* has been used to describe acts of violence between family members, including adult and adolescent partners, between a parent and a child (including adult children), between caretakers or partners against elders, and between siblings. Although sometimes used interchangeably, the term *domestic violence* is generally seen as a subset of family violence between intimates so that the term *intimate partner violence* appears to be replacing *domestic violence* for the sake of definitional clarity.

The Family Violence Prevention Fund defines IPV as a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors that