

Sociology 125
Lectures 17 & 18

Gender

November 6 & 8

I. GENDER & NATURE

1. Definition of Sex & Gender

Sex = a biological distinction based on roles in the process of biological reproduction

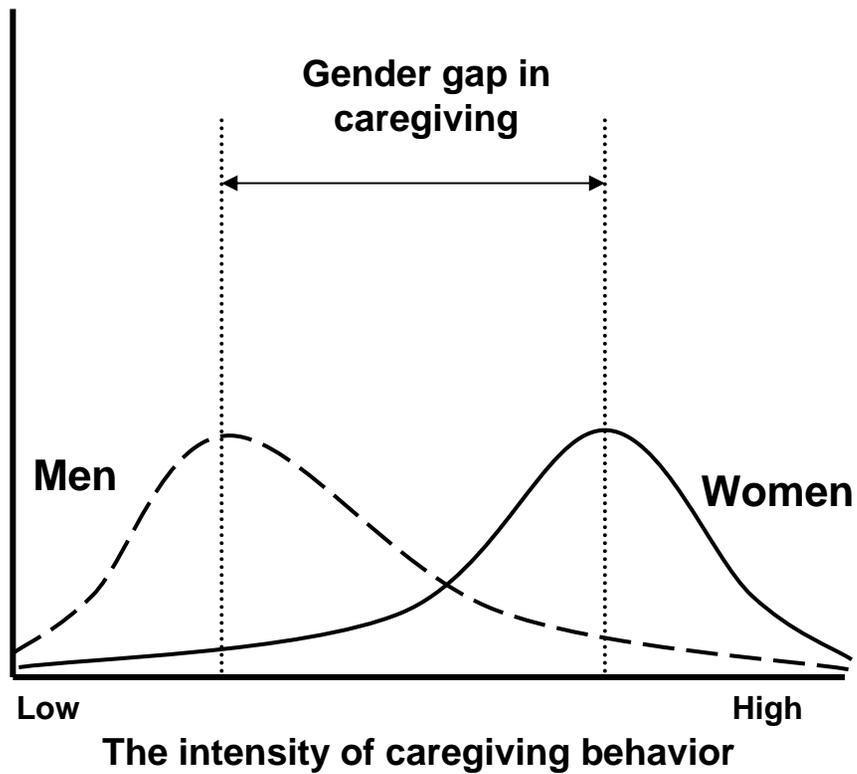
Gender = a social distinction between roles and expectations linked to sex.

Gender is the social transformation of a biological difference, sex, into a social difference.

Gender norms are the rules of appropriate behavior and roles for men and women.

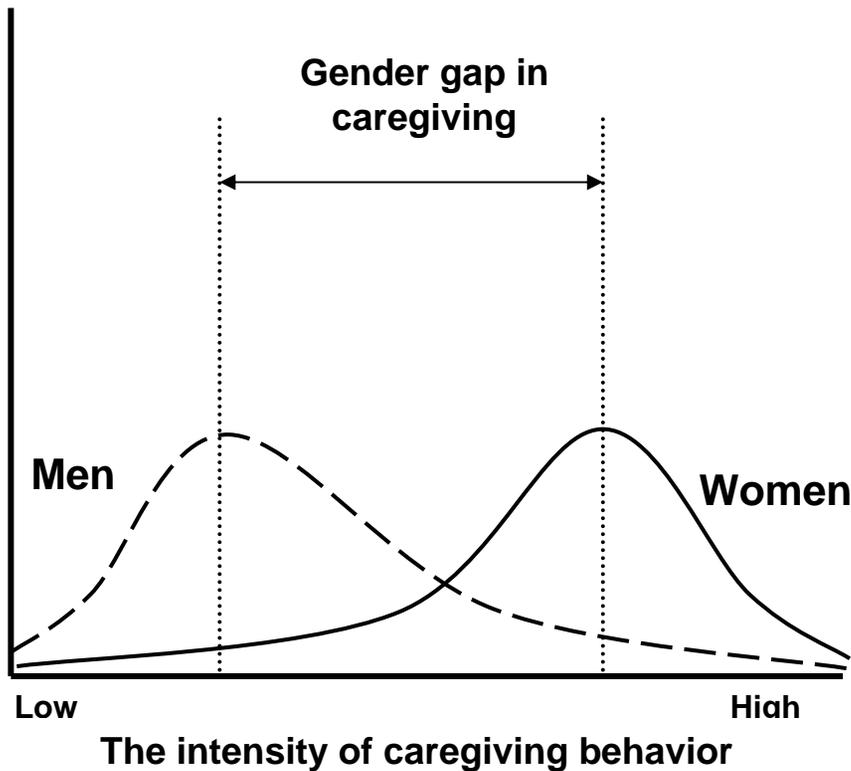
2. What is Natural?

I. Existing distribution of caregiving in a world with strong gender norms

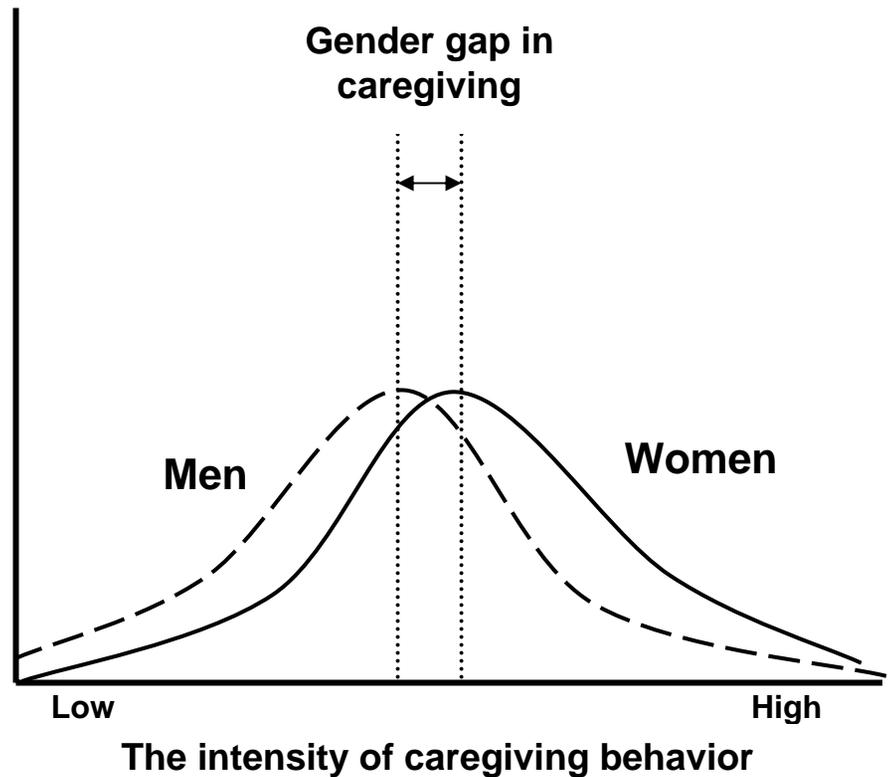


2. What is Natural?

I. Existing distribution of caregiving in a world with strong gender norms



II. Hypothetical distributions of caregiving in a world with weak gender norms



II. THE EMPIRICAL
STORY: MASSIVE
TRANSFORMATIONS IN
THREE GENERATIONS

Five important elements of transformations of gender relations

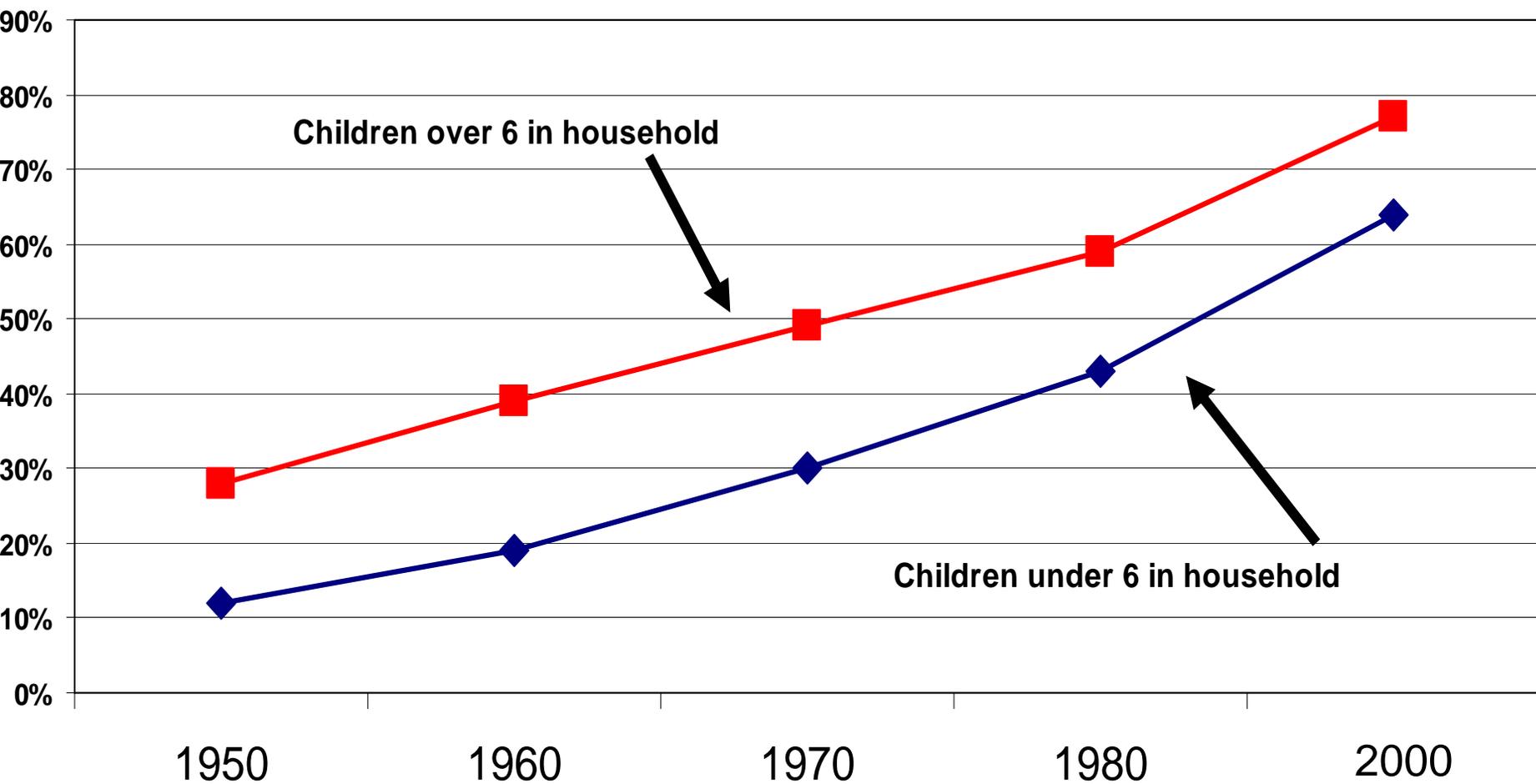
1. Legal Rights
2. Labor force participation
3. Family structure
4. Occupational Structure
5. Domestic division of labor

1. Legal Rights gained by women

- Right to vote (1920)
- Right to own passport (early 1930s)
- Equal right to divorce (gradually since 1940s)
- Reproductive rights (1973, but eroding)
- Equal rights to university admission (1960s)
- Equal rights to all jobs (1960s)
- Equal rights to participate in sports (1972)

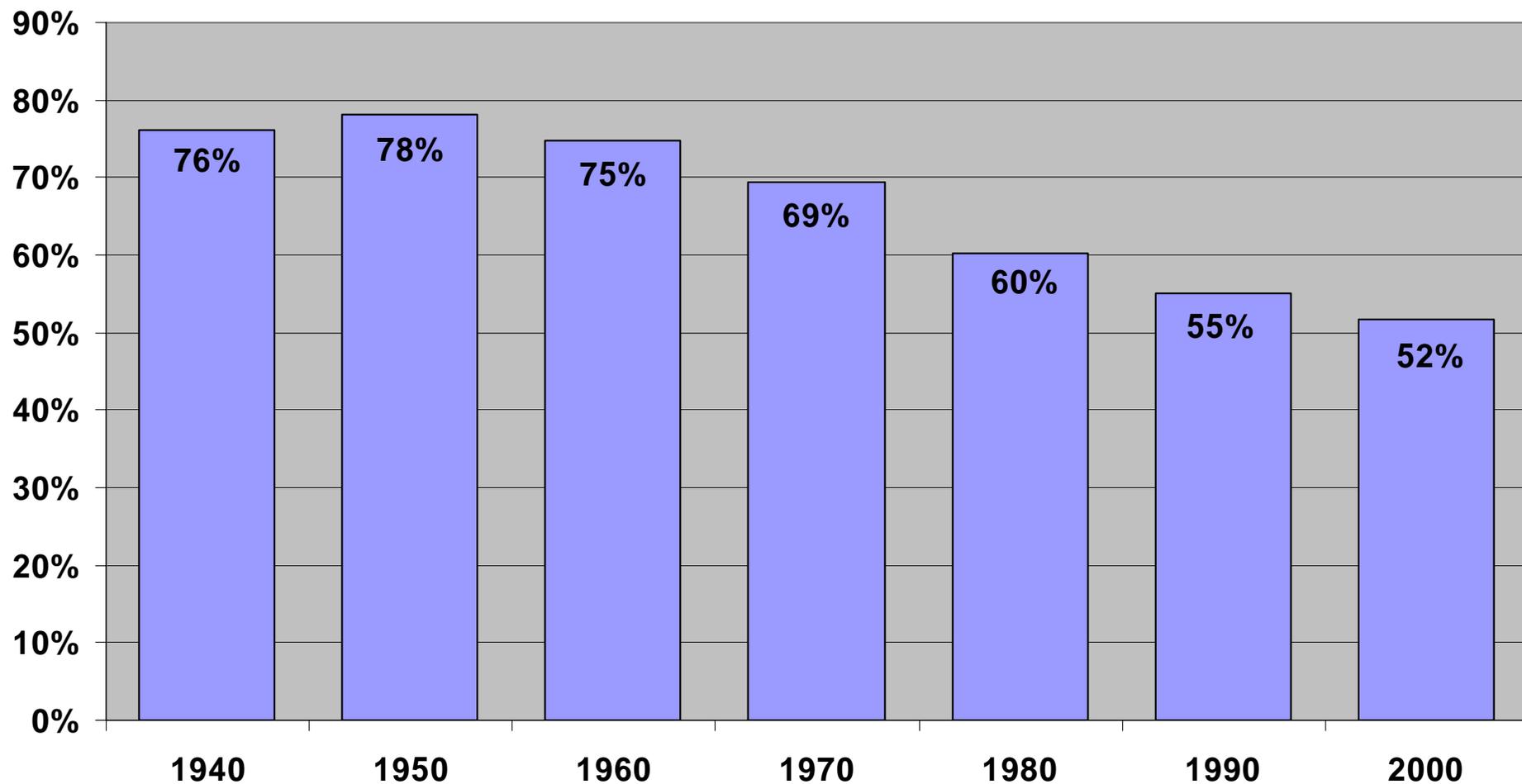
II. Massive change: 2. labor force participation

2. Labor Force Participation Rates of Married Women with Children, 1950-2000



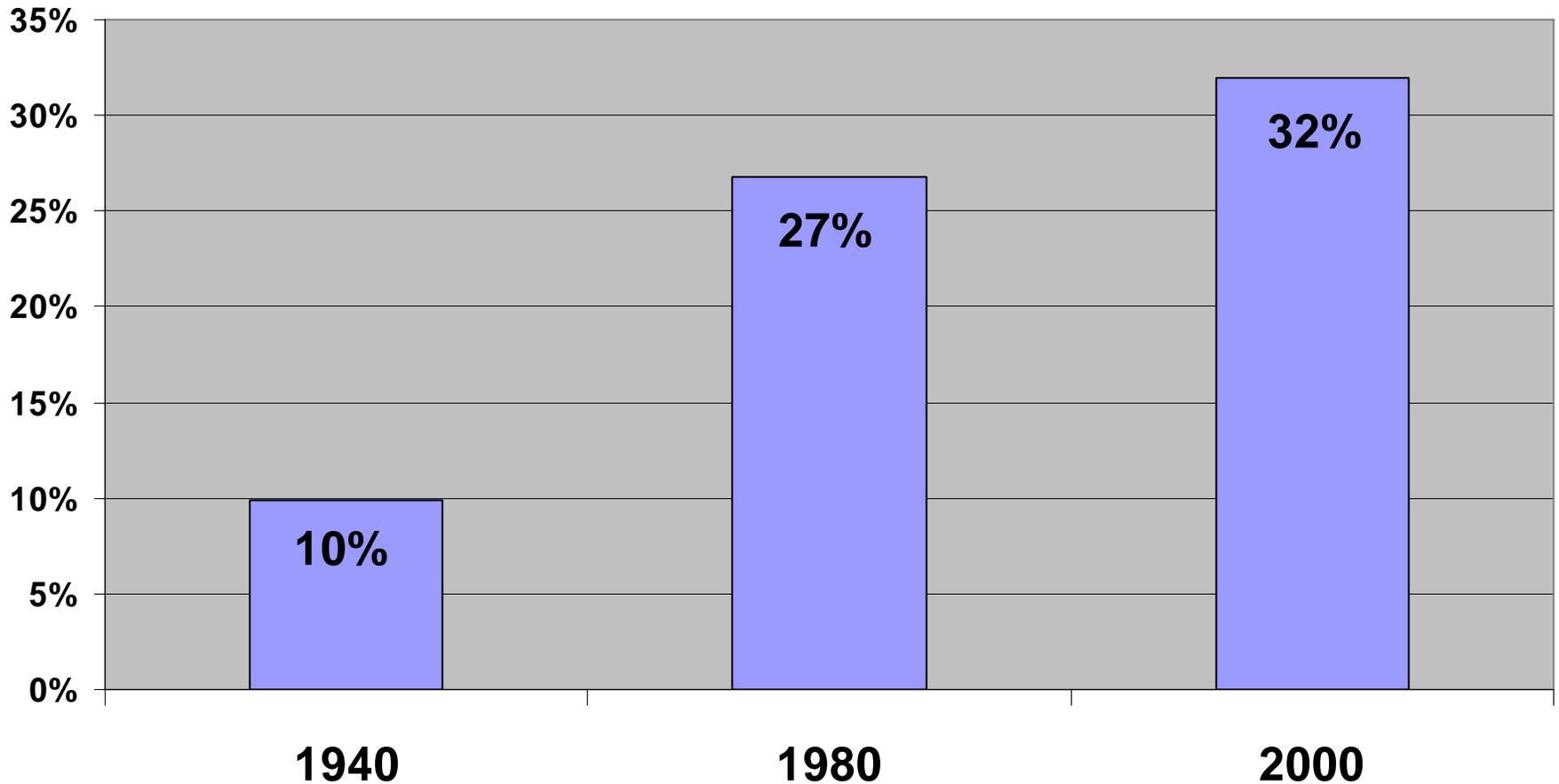
II. Massive change: 3. family structure

% of Households that consist of a Married Couple



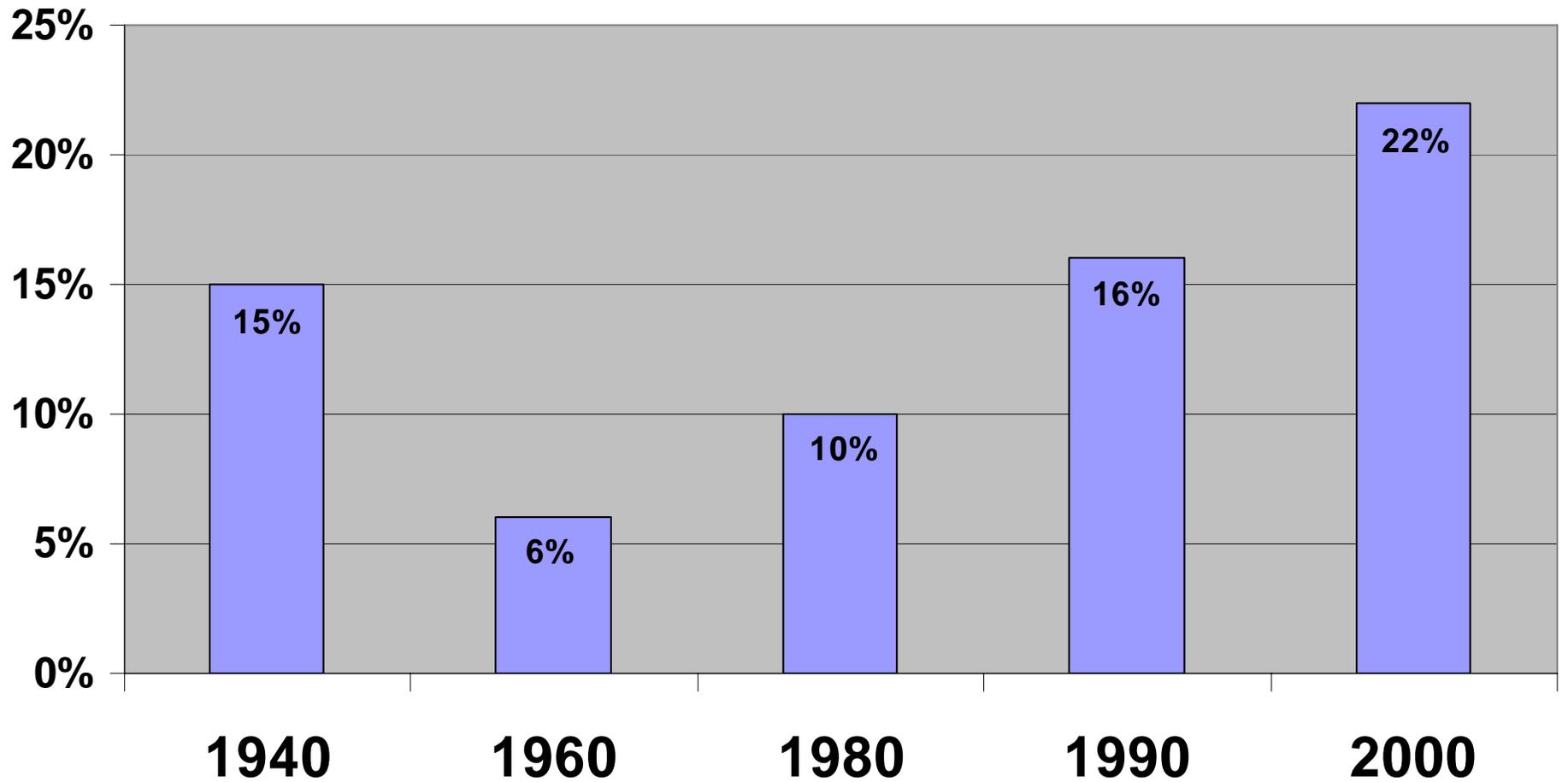
II. Massive change: 3. family structure

% of Households that consist of a Single Person living alone



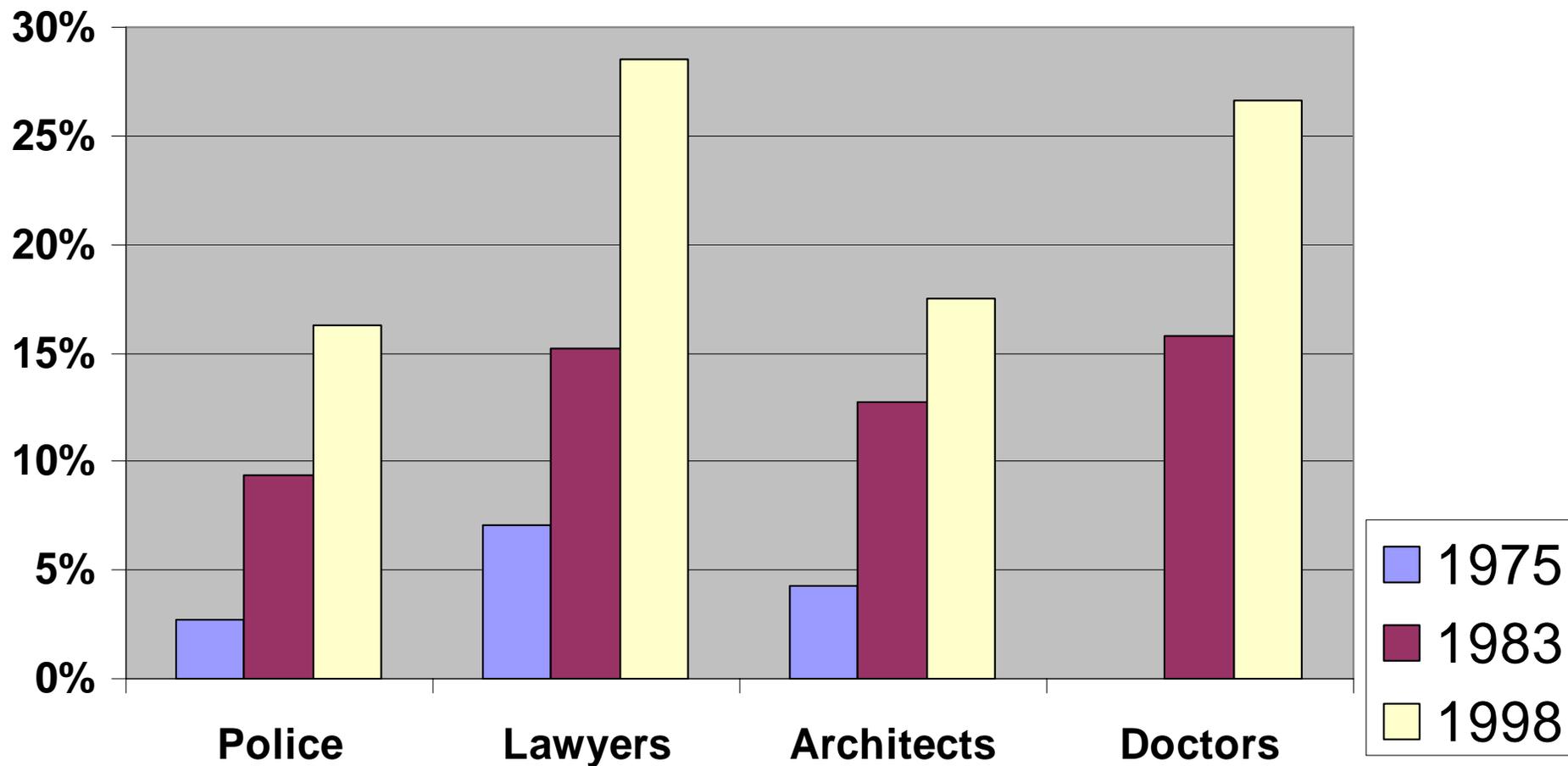
II. Massive change: 3. family structure

% of Women ages 30-34 who have Never Married, 1940-2000



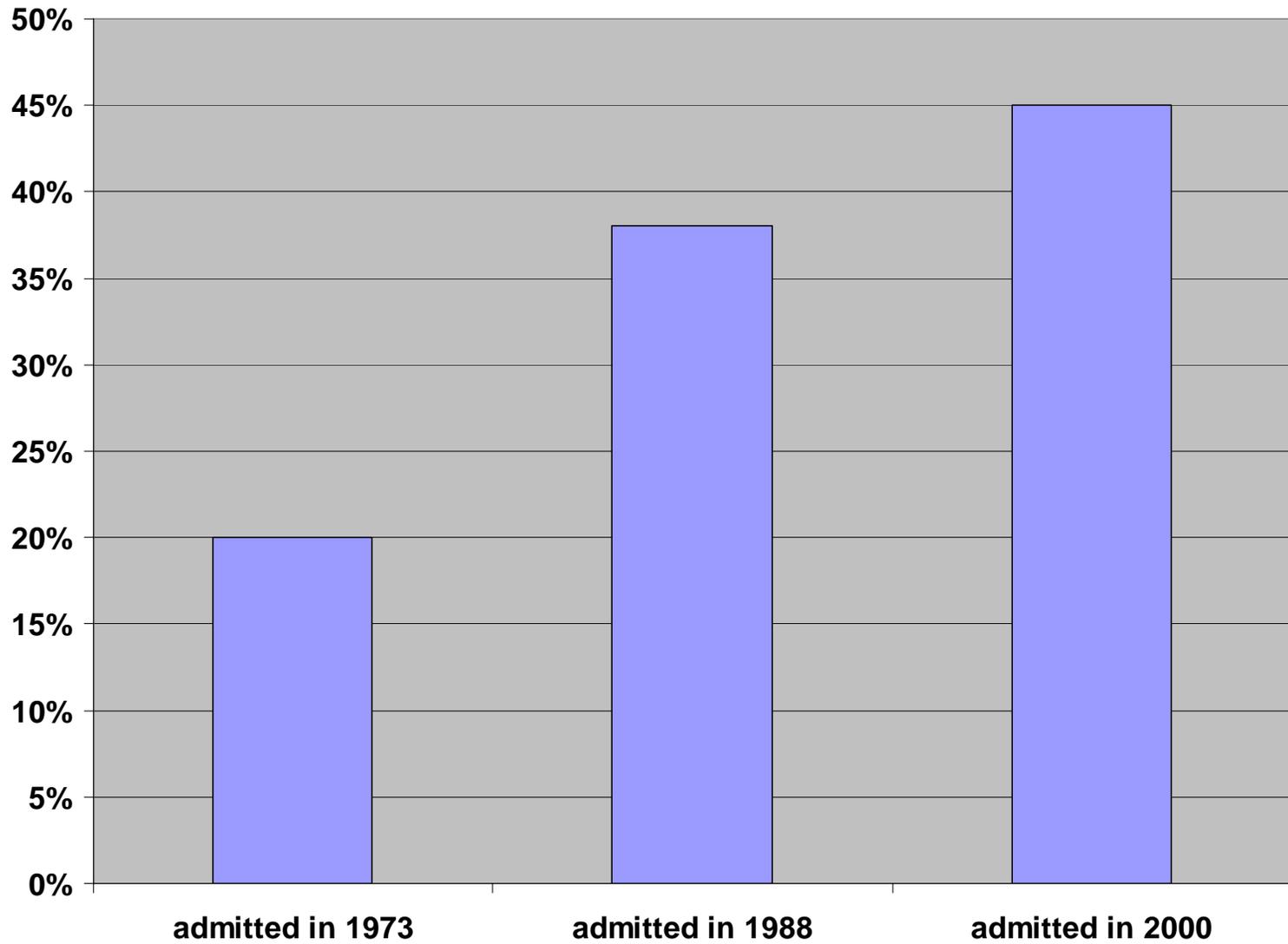
II. Massive change: 4. occupations

% of People in Selected Traditionally Male Professions who are Women, 1975, 1983, 1998



II. Massive change: 4. occupations

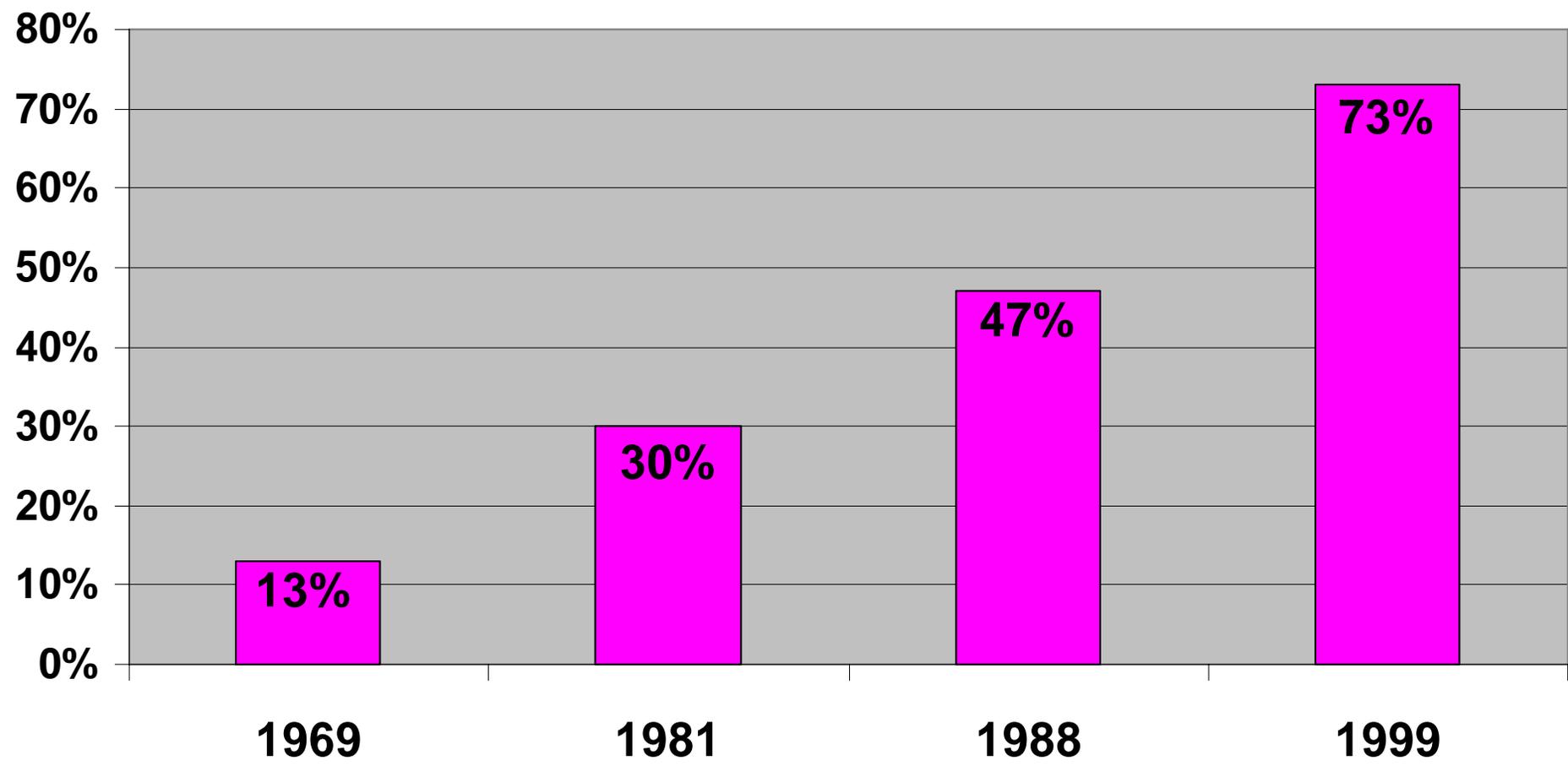
% of admitted medical students who are women



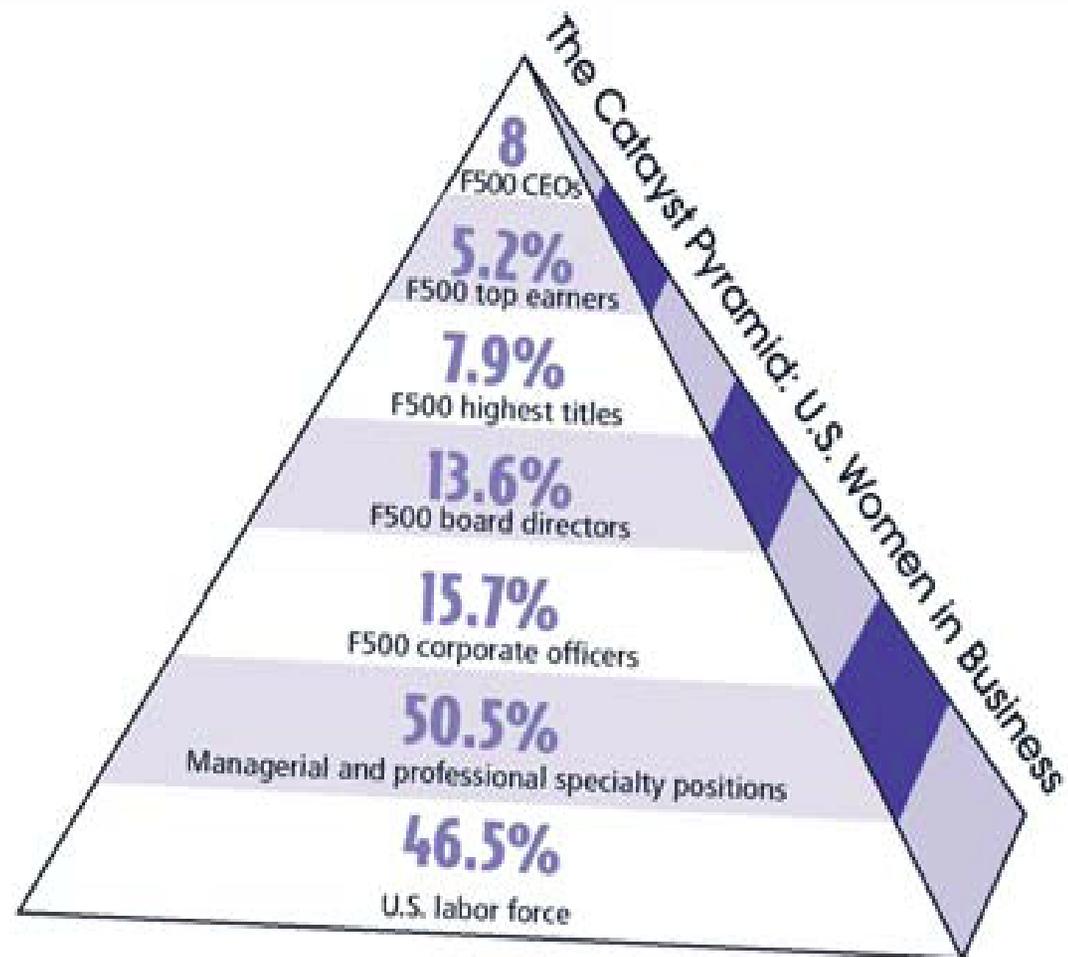
**% of Women in
Selected Highly Gender-Segregated Jobs**

	1975	1998
secretary	99.1%	98.4%
RN	97.0%	92.5%
Dental Assistant	100.0%	98.1%
Carpenter	0.6%	1.2%
Airline pilot	0.3%	3.4%
auto mechanic	0.5%	0.8%

% of the 1000 Largest U.S. Corporations with at least one Woman on the Board of Directors

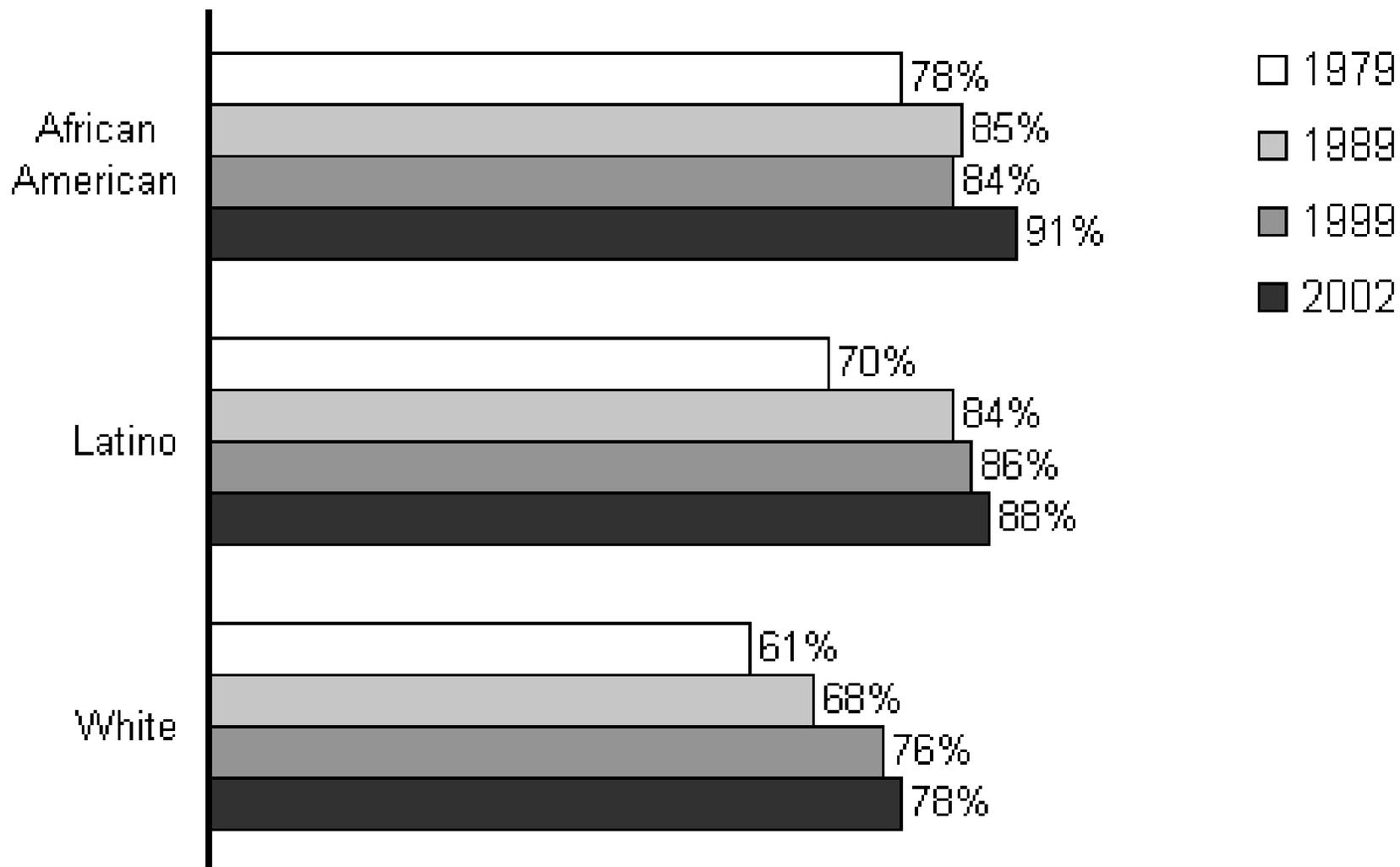


II. Massive change: 4. occupations

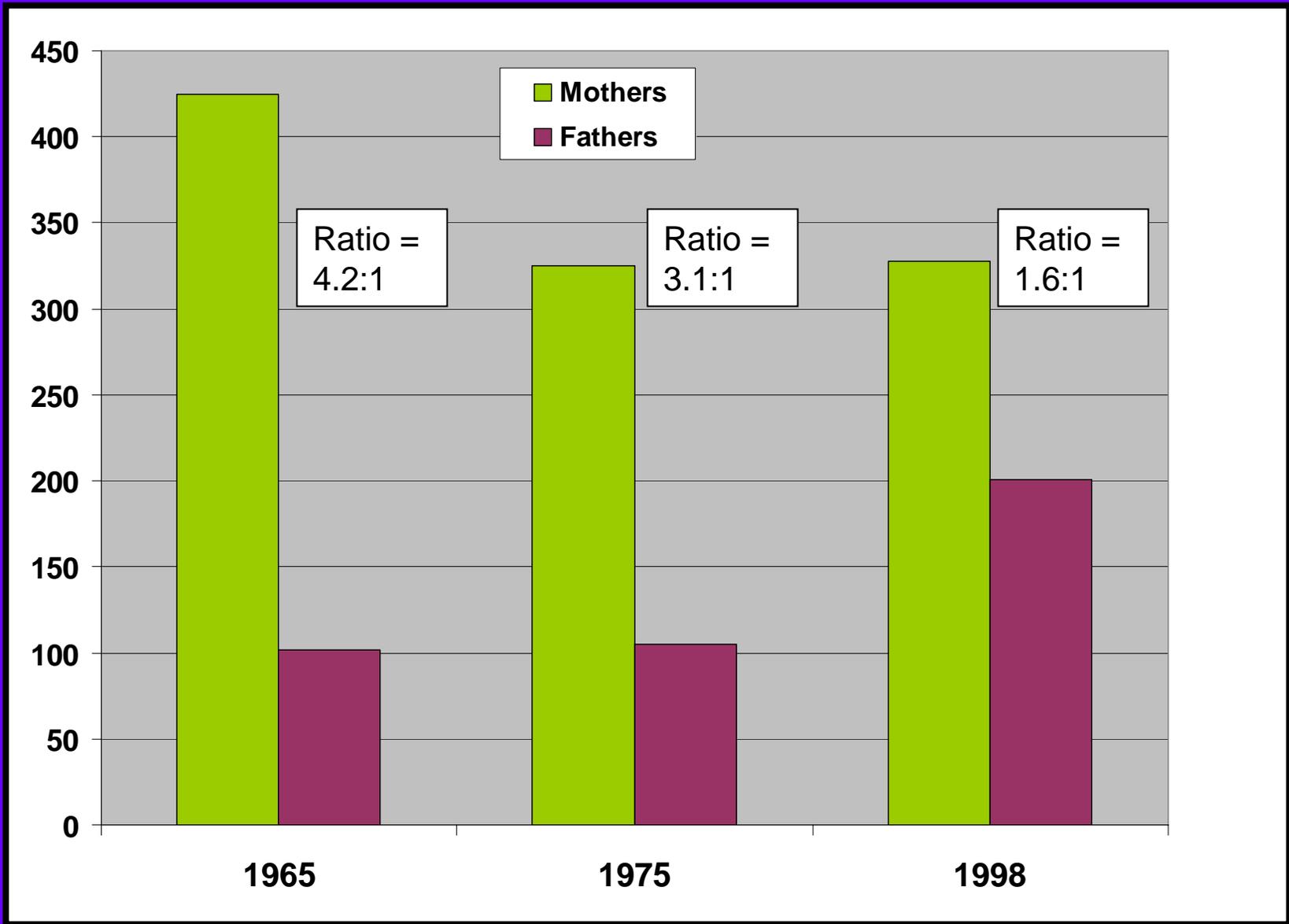


Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment & Earnings, January 2003;
Catalyst, 2001 Catalyst Census of Women Board Directors;
Catalyst, 2002 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners

Earnings of women as a % of men

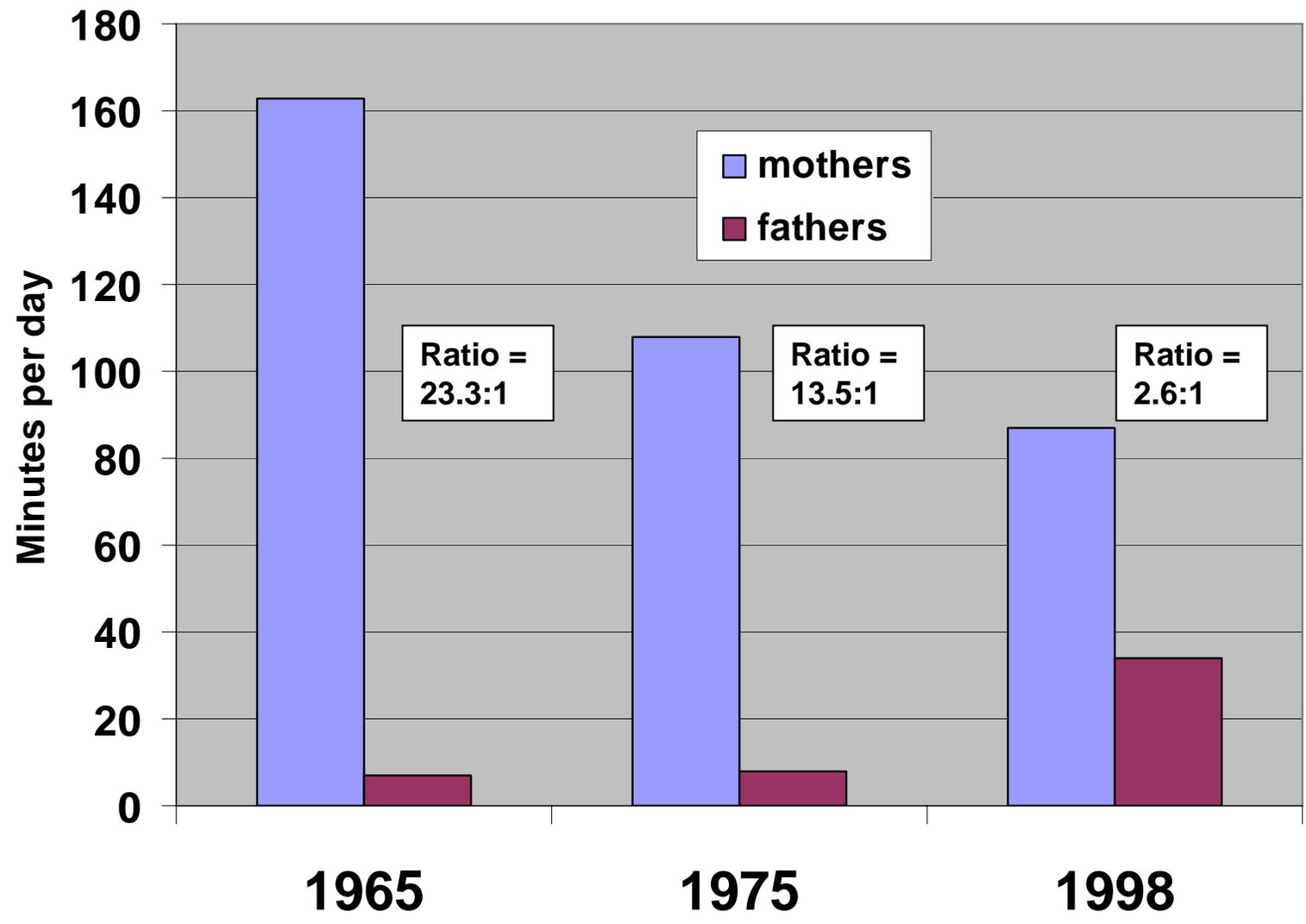


II. Massive change: 5. domestic labor



Time devoted by Mothers and Fathers to all domestic activities (Housework, childcare, shopping, home repairs, etc.)

Mothers and fathers time spent cleaning house



III. EXPLAINING TRANSFORMATION

1. POSITIONAL & STATUS INEQUALITIES

Positional inequalities =

inequalities defined by the relationship between *positions* or *roles* within an institution: for example, managers and workers within firms; childcare giver and breadwinner within families; army officer and privates within the military.

Status inequalities =

inequalities in the privileges, opportunities, rewards accorded to *personal attributes of individuals*: race, gender, ethnicity, age.

2. Two Theses: Gender Inequality and Its Erosion

(1) Gender inequality thesis:

“The link between gender and positional inequality has been the key to women’s status.” (*Destined for Equality*, p.14)

(2) The erosion of gender inequality thesis:

“Gender inequality has declined primarily through an erosion of the overlap between gender and the major forms of positional inequality”
(*Destined for Equality*, p.14)

3. The Logic of Social Change: the interplay of structural conditions and social struggles

Basic idea:

Women have tried throughout history to increase their autonomy and reduce their subordination, but they could only succeed in doing this on a large scale once social conditions had changed in ways that made gender power relations fragile.

The transformation of social conditions

“The driving force behind this transformation has been the migration of economic and political power outside the household and its reorganization around business and political interests detached from gender....Gender inequality declined because modern society transferred social power from people committed to preserving men’s advantages to institutions and people whose interests were indifferent to gender distinctions....While prejudices against women still ruled many actions of men with power, their institutional interests repeatedly prompted them to take actions incompatible with preserving gender inequality.”

*(From *Destined for Equality* by Robert Max Jackson)*

IV. THE CRISIS OF DOMESTICITY

1. Traditional social supports for domesticity = a coherent system

- Stable marriage/personal relations fostered domesticity
- blocked work opportunities increased the attractiveness of domesticity
- A family wage made domesticity economically feasible
- dense social networks supported domesticity (neighbors, churches, communities, etc.)
- cultural norms and sexism reinforced identities and expectations

2. Collapse of the system of sustainable domesticity beginning in the 1960s

- decline of stable marriage means women cannot count on support of husbands
- expansion of work opportunities increased the viability of alternatives to domesticity
- decline of the family wage made domesticity economically difficult
- erosion of dense social networks makes domesticity more isolated and difficult
- challenge to cultural norms and traditional sexism contributes to new identities

V. THE WORLD TODAY:
DILEMMAS AND
PROSPECTS

1. Imagine two possible worlds

World #1	World #2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Average wages of men and women are about the same• Good quality childcare is provided by the city or employers free or at low cost• Generous paid parental leave for caregiving emergencies and early infant care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Average wages of women are 75-80% of wages of men• No childcare is provided by the city or employers; private daycare is expensive or of poor quality• no paid parental leave for caregiving emergencies or early infant care

World #2 is like Sweden

World #2 is like the United States

2. IRREVERSIBILITY OF FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES

- Dramatic decline in family size unlikely to be reversed: permanent erosion of lifetime domesticity as an ideal
- Traditional marriage stability unlikely to be restored
- women's labor force participation unlikely to be reversed
- women's participation in powerful and influential positions unlikely to decline

3. The problem of Winners & Losers

- Gender equality imposes costs on some women and erodes some of the security that comes with traditional female dependency.
- Certain ways of life, valued by many women and men, are threatened by gender equality.
- Men have contradictory interests with respect to gender inequality: men have much to gain from gender equality, but some losses as well.
- Gains for men = opening up of choices around parenting & work; the cult of masculinity blocks the full development of personhood in men. Losses = more competition for higher jobs; end of gender-based privileges.

4. Three Critical Reforms to facilitate gender equality and reduce the work/life dilemmas faced by both men and women

1. Pay Equity: equal pay for comparable work
2. Quality public provision of childcare in neighborhoods and workplaces
3. Generous paid parental leaves