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College women’s involvement in dress and their relationship to images of themselves, including that of the “New Woman,” 1895-1920

by

Mary Alice Casto

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Textiles and Clothing
Jane Farrell-Beck (Major Professor)
Mary Lynn Damhorst
Amy Bix

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This is to certify that the master's thesis of

Mary Alice Casto

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Justification

The New Woman emerged in the last decade of the nineteenth century as the model of the modern woman. Her predecessor, the True Woman, was tied to the domestic sphere of home and family. Education, work outside the home, and strenuous exercise were believed to permanently damage the health of the True Woman, leaving her sterile and unable to perform her primary duty in life. This duty was to marry, give birth, and raise a family. The New Woman, however, emerged into the public sphere, formerly reserved for men, as an independent, intelligent, athletic, and educated woman. She attended one of the women's colleges founded after the Civil War or, by the end of the century, attended one of the new coeducational institutions. The New Woman envisioned a career after graduation in an expanding job market for women. This market included jobs in education and also the newer areas of social work and business.

In many ways, the female college student was the quintessential New Woman, because a college education was at the heart of what the New Woman was seeking. Gordon asserted that by the 1890s the collegiate New Woman had advanced beyond her previous image as a masculine woman, even though the university and college campuses of this period were still considered gateways to the male world of public affairs. However, this viewpoint did not remain consistent throughout my period of study. As the 1920s approached, women's attitudes toward attending a university changed, as resistance to their presence decreased. After about 1890, the female college student was able to turn her attention from the struggle to attend a university to the enjoyment and
usefulness of the experience. From 1890 to 1920, the collegial New Woman used the university campus to expand her horizons and challenge traditional behavioral mores. 

However, these changes were not all smooth. Most women, especially those who attended college, came from very traditional middle-class backgrounds. Their mothers had never been to college and maternal “careers” were still mainly in the domestic sphere. Growing up in such an atmosphere would have socialized many women in very traditional “feminine” behaviors, one of which was the pursuit of attractiveness. Women have consistently been socialized to believe that their appearance is one of their most essential characteristics. The college woman could not have entirely avoided this socialization. Even the media of the day produced images of the New Woman that reinforced the importance of appearance.

One portrayal of the New Woman in the media was Charles Dana Gibson’s “Gibson Girl” drawings. The New Woman as the Gibson Girl wore the fashionable tight corsets and high-necked gowns of the period. Another prominent media image of the New Woman, this one created by contemporary medical experts, was the New Woman as the “mannish lesbian.” Smith-Rosenberg discussed how this type of New Woman had very masculine physical traits as well as a masculine fashion sense. The “mannish lesbian” was, however, in many cases only the New Woman as dress reformer. Because much of the clothing she advocated incorporated features of traditional, Western, male attire, the dress reformer threatened to the status quo. Therefore, the representations of her in the media were designed to discredit this version of the New Woman by labeling her a freak, especially in terms of her appearance.
Role of the Media and Advertising

Many studies have been done on the effect of media on the public. The basic theories really diverge in two directions. At one end is the view that the media merely reflect current societal conditions and beliefs while at the other end it is theorized that the media actually shape and affect what people believe. Belk and Pollay provided evidence that changes in media reflect and record changes in the society it represents. Although many of these studies were conducted on modern media, they are adaptable to the popular media of the past and in particular to the representations of the New Woman.

Images of the New Woman, in various guises, were abundant in the popular literature of the day, from novels to magazines. In fact, in many ways the New Woman existed only within her media representation. The sobriquet New Woman appeared first in 1894 in the North American Review with a negative image. Thereafter, the issue of the New Woman and her existence was hotly debated in the press and periodicals of the day. To a certain extent a total New Woman may never have lived; however, the very real gender issues that fueled the debate reinforced the existence of a less extreme form of New Woman than her detractors tried to portray.

The purpose of this study is to investigate and try to reveal a picture of how the college woman, who was mainly middle- to upper-middle-class, white, and native born, interacted with the media and her various images, including that of the New Woman, represented therein. The logical beginning for this study was 1895 the year after Ouida coined the term New Woman. As for an ending date, 1920 seemed appropriate because the end of World War I and the 1920s marked a transition in US history. Also, the introduction of the New Woman coincides nicely with the beginning of the second
generation of college women. I will assume that the New Woman did indeed exist and use the college woman as her representative. This example of the New Woman likely followed the debate over her characteristics in the media. Of the available sources, magazines were cheaper and available to a wider audience. Mott’s study of the American magazine suggests that the *Ladies Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping* and *The Delineator* were three of the most popular woman’s magazines of the period.\(^{17}\) These magazines contained illustrations, advertisements, and articles that reflected and helped shape the attitudes towards appearance and dress of the New Woman and her contemporaries.\(^{18}\) Schneider and Schneider noted that the image of the New Woman in the media contributed to expectations of perpetual beauty, even after career and marriage.\(^{19}\)

The press also satirized the New Woman and her manner of dress through cartoons and caricatures. Marks indicated that the satirization and caricature would likely not have appeared as often in the women’s periodicals because it was mainly a male sport to make fun of female fashion.\(^{20}\) Thus, these images of the New Women would have appeared in the popular periodicals targeted to the masculine audience; fewer women would have read these on a regular basis. This does not mean, however, that the college woman was oblivious to this type of media representation.

Research Questions
1. Did the college women express any reactions to the outside forces trying to determine their appearance and dress norms?
2. What part did her peer group play in appearance and dress decisions of the college woman?
3. Did college women discuss the media and its various portrayals of the New Woman? Did they accept or reject these portrayals?

4. Were there similarities or differences between how the New Woman was portrayed in the media and what real women said about appearance and dress?

5. Did the negative depictions of the New Woman in the media affect real women’s decisions about dress and appearance?

Objectives

1. To determine how actual New Women dressed in their manifestation as college students from 1895-1920.

2. To determine how these college women felt about appearance and dress.

3. To determine whether college women interacted with images of the New Woman in the media.

4. To examine the amount of influence the New Woman image had compared to peer groups and family in deciding college students’ appearance.

5. To investigate differences in media portrayals, including that of the New Woman, and how college women actually dressed and altered their appearance from 1895-1920.

Definitions

Prescriptive literature: This includes such literature as advice manuals, etiquette books, periodicals, newspapers and moralizing fiction or anything else written to represent, explain or shape the behavior of a certain group. 21

Dress: An “assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body,” which can include clothing, hairstyle, cosmetics, pierced ears, tattoos and shape altering undergarments such as corsets. 22
Appearance: The overall visual look of an individual including actual physical features as well as components of dress.\textsuperscript{23}

Limitations

1. The primary sources mainly reflect what was read and produced by the literate, white, middle- to upper-class portions of society in the United States.

2. The research is limited to collegiate "New Women" who left written evidence of their lives.

\textsuperscript{1} Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," \textit{American Quarterly} 18, (Summer 1966): 151-74.


\textsuperscript{4} Gordon, 211-215.


\textsuperscript{7} Rita Freedman, \textit{Beauty Bound} (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1986).


\textsuperscript{9} Smith-Rosenberg, \textit{Disorderly Conduct}, 271-82.

\textsuperscript{10} Patricia Marks, \textit{Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press} (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1990), 1-2.


\textsuperscript{14} The term was coined by Ouida a pseudonym for Marie Louise de la Ramee, an English novelist.

\textsuperscript{15} Pykett, 137-153; Ledger, 9-34, Smith-Rosenberg, \textit{Disorderly Conduct}, 245-296.
16 Solomon, 62-77.
19 Schneider & Schneider, 16-17.
20 Marks, 1-2.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The True Woman

In order to gain a greater understanding of the New Woman it is necessary to understand her ancestors. One the more important precursors to the New Woman was the True Woman. Much of the early scholarship that delved into women's social history, versus the standard "great man"-oriented history, dealt with the idea of the Cult of Domesticity or the Cult of True Womanhood, although the word cult has fallen into disuse.\(^1\) This view of women encompassed the idea that there were separate spheres for men and women and that the family could not function properly unless everyone stayed in his or her sphere.\(^2\) The True Woman ideal existed from about 1800 until the beginning of the Civil War. The Civil War, in many ways, marked the beginning of the end for the True Woman because during the conflict women were purposely called on to participate in the male sphere of civil service.\(^3\) However, while it lasted, the Cult of Domesticity had a powerful impact on women and their life choices.

Barbara Welter breaks down the Cult of True Womanhood into four characteristics that exemplified the True Woman. These traits were "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity."\(^4\) Barbara Harris also describes four basic concepts that distinguished the idea of the True Woman. Harris's concepts include

- a sharp dichotomy between the home and the economic outside that paralleled a sharp contrast between female and male natures, the designation of the home as the female's only proper sphere, the moral superiority of woman, and the idealization of her function as mother.\(^5\)

These basic ideas placed various limitations on women in terms of what they were expected and allowed to do. However, it should be noted that both women and men believed, created,
and maintained the idea of separate spheres. As a consequence, both sexes participated in the restrictions and requirements of the roles they set for themselves, although it has been argued that women had the lower status roles.

Some of the most important restrictions for the purposes of this study were those that limited women’s education and their participation in the world outside of the home. Women were believed to have an inferior intellect but a superior morality, thus, any knowledge beyond rudimentary literacy and math skills was not seen as essential to a woman’s education. Her main educational function was to impart to her family a sense of morality. With the advent of the industrialization, as many historians have documented, the means of production were removed from the home and men followed. This change led to the idea that the public sphere belonged solely to men. The world outside the home, the modern work arena, was considered an immoral place, at least in terms of how people, or rather men, behaved in order to succeed. Therefore, the separateness of the home was connected to the separateness of woman’s moral and religious character. In fact, Nancy Cott states, “the home became separate because women resided there.”

Another motivation for women to remain in the home, also tied to the industrial development, was as a status symbol. Much as owning a fancy car today proclaims the owner’s financial status, so during the nineteenth century having a wife who did not have to work outside the home declared a man’s standing in society. According to Gerda Lerner, the argument for the existence of the true woman gained greater insistence from about 1840 onwards, as women began to enter the workforce in greater numbers than in previous decades. Barbara Berg also posited that women’s obsession with fashion has roots in this phenomenon. She stated that most husbands, in addition to gaining status because their wives
did not work, gained additional status from their appearance. Thus, it became very important to have a wife who was well dressed and groomed at all times. In Berg’s view, separate spheres did not allow women many outlets for their intellect; servants, another important status symbol, limited their household tasks. As a result, many women used dress and appearance as a creative and intellectual outlet. In many cases women were dissatisfied with even this outlet.13

However, most sources maintain that the more persistent force in keeping women in the home was the belief in her inherent nature as an important moral force in a decadent world. This idea of moral uplift was logically extended to a woman’s role as mother. The mother was seen as the hope for society, because through her children became good citizens.14 In fact, the only justification for any type of education for women stemmed from their ability to impart knowledge to their children. According to Harris, women were educated “not despite their sex but rather because of it.”15 More importantly, female children were instructed in their proper role in society.16 The idea was to train women to know their place and “maternal destiny.”17 Thus, since woman belonged by their very nature in the home then it was also important that they understand how to properly maintain that home. The idea of training women in their proper domestic duties was a form of education for women, indeed their most important form of education.18 Many authors note that the fiction of the day frequently illuminated the plight of the poor young girl who knew mathematics and geography but sadly could not prepare dinner or keep a tidy house.19

As well, ideas about women’s supposed physical frailty, intellectual inferiority, and all consuming reproductive functions justified limiting women’s education and involvement in the public sphere.20 Women, during the period before the Civil War, often referred to their
constant physical suffering. A woman’s role in her family and place in the home were worth any sacrifice and so society “advocated domesticity while loudly proclaiming its physical cost.” This inability to even maintain their health within the home certainly helped preclude any foray into the infinitely harsher public sphere.

The doctors of the 1870s and 1880s added a new dimension to the idea that women belonged in the domestic sphere. They believed that a woman’s reproductive organs were in direct competition with her brain for any energy that she expended. Physicians, of which the most widely cited is Dr. Edward Clarke, believed that the educated woman was a pale, ill replica of her domestic sister. Dr. Clarke cited many instances in his study where he felt that the stress of studying had created deformed and infertile young women.

The varied concepts associated with the True Woman can be contained in the simple idea that interpersonal relationships, whether to a husband, parents, or children defined a woman. A True Woman suppressed her desires in favor of the needs of others. Any dissatisfaction that a woman felt from this role was her own personal failure. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg does posit that women did not deal with their troubles in isolation but rather that women used the idea of separate spheres to form lasting and abiding bonds with one another. These bonds were many times closer than the marital bond and provided women with the love, understanding, and support that they needed to survive within their segregated world.

Along the same line, Frances Cogan, believed that women from 1840 to 1880 were not imprisoned by the idea that women belonged in a separate sphere. Within this time period Cogan introduces the “real” woman as a competing ideal for the “true” woman. The real woman still believed that woman’s place was in the home; however, Cogan maintained that many women expanded their opportunities within this milieu. She listed four
essentials for the "real" woman: a stress on physical fitness and health, the importance of higher education for women and her role in the home, the importance of marriage and making the correct choice of marital partner and the idea that employment outside the home while not encouraged was acceptable for economic reasons. She cited many primary sources that refuted the idea that a woman was inferior in any manner, rather they seemed to argue that she was merely different in some ways. These sources also seemed to suggest that women in this period could have an alternate set of characteristics that they believed embodied a "real" woman.

One of the "real" woman's main characteristics was the idea that she was a very healthy, athletic and energetic individual, which contradicted the perpetually ill image of the True Woman. This vigorous individual was as a consequence a very attractive person, while invalidism was thought to detract from physical beauty. The real women also did not subscribe to the foibles of fashion to which so many of their sisters were prone. The literature that promoted the real women had much to say against the tight corseting imposed by the fashionable world, actually insisting that this practice contributed to the frailty of most women or in other terms the True Woman. Along these same lines many authors believed that with freedom in clothing came the ability to exercise effectively thus further contributing to physical beauty. In her book, *Able-Bodied Womanhood: Personal Health and Social Change in Nineteenth Century Boston*, Martha Verbrugge gave evidence that this healthy, energetic woman existed. She found that Bostonians perceived a significant health problem among women in line with the image of the True Woman as an invalid. However, rather than accepting the situation as the unchangeable lot of womankind, the people of Boston attempted to address the issue. The citizens of Boston, which included many prominent
health reformers, used various means to promote healthy living, physical activity and adjustments to women's clothing so that it was less constraining.\textsuperscript{31}

Another important difference between the True Woman and the "real" woman was the emphasis placed on education. Rather than maintaining that women, by virtue of their place in the home, did not need or desire an academic education, Cogan states that the "real" woman needed a fully developed education in order to adequately fulfill her given role.\textsuperscript{32} Unlike the True Woman, "real" women combined an academic education with the domestic education promoted by the Cult of True Womanhood.\textsuperscript{33} In fact, an academic education was considered especially important for a wife because it provided mental stimulation for her as she fulfilled her domestic duties.\textsuperscript{34}

The "real" woman also used her education to attract the correct type of mate. It seems evident from the sources cited by Cogan that physical attractiveness and education ranked side by side in what many writers described as the perfect wife. In fact, an education and physical attractiveness were interconnected for the "real" woman, with the first contributing to the second.\textsuperscript{35} It is interesting to note that these views existed concurrently with the views of Dr. Edward Clarke and other physicians who believed that an education made women unattractive, physically and mentally.\textsuperscript{36} However, it should be noted that there were still limitations placed upon the educated "real" woman that were in some ways similar to those placed on the True Woman. For one, the "real" woman was not allowed to reveal that she was better versed in some subjects than her male counterparts. She was also constrained to use her education only to influence her home and family rather than for her own gain.\textsuperscript{37}
The New Woman

The "real" woman existed, according to Cogan, until 1880 when the True Woman ideal finally defeated her. However, not long thereafter the New Woman emerged containing some of the remnants of the "real" woman. The New Woman's goals were in direct conflict with most of the cherished tenets of the Cult of True Womanhood. The New Woman's most damaging characteristic, and probably the one that supported of her more specific aspirations was that she yearned for autonomy and independence like that enjoyed by men. Independence meant that she wanted to expand her horizons outside of her "natural" domain, the home. She wanted to be able to do something besides getting married and having children. Autonomy meant that rather than subsuming her self, her desires, her talents, and her ambitions in her family she wanted to seek self-fulfillment through education, work, and sexual freedom or at least reproductive freedom.

Many observers, male and female, saw the New Woman as a danger to the family and home because she did not profess the True Woman ideals. She championed, such as suffrage, birth control, and reform of the divorce and marriage laws which resulted in additional fear and distrust from society. These causes had roots in the idea that woman were oppressed by laws that bound them to their husband and to a life where they could not make free choices. For example, the idea of disseminating information on birth control would allow women freedom from the dangers and inconveniences of repeated childbirth; however, much of the male population saw birth control as a repudiation of women's primary role. Detractors also felt that it would allow women to have sexual autonomy, or rather that sex for a woman would be more like sex for a man with no unavoidable ties to reproduction. Thus, because in their quest for autonomy many of the more radical New Women attacked the
status quo in a determined fashion, they were a very frightening phenomenon for much of society. There was great uneasiness because people felt that important feminine traits would fall by the wayside and women would become crass and immoral creatures like men.

For this reason, the New Woman ideal was not nearly as pervasive as the Cult of True Womanhood. For everyone who had a vested interest in seeing the New Woman become a transcendent image, even more people had a vested interest in maintaining the very comfortable and familiar status quo. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg described the New Woman as a “liminal” figure, someone who existed on the outskirts of traditional society. She didn’t receive an education once reserved for men; however, all that it really managed to do for her was create a person who had no real place in society. While she created many same-sex relationships with others who had similar experiences, the choice to “become” what society considered a New Woman was a lonely one. Both Elizabeth Ammons and Carolyn Forrey also discussed women who accomplished much but seemed to be left with few choices. These impressions come from the contemporary literature; however, the reality was that many women faced a choice between returning to their accepted role or being looked at with pity and in some cases ostracized because they did things that men were supposed to do.

The New Woman was a limited image in other ways as well. The ideals and experiences of the New Woman were really only available to a small segment of the population. The middle to upper-middle class white women were the primary beneficiaries of women’s expanding horizons while other groups were consistently ignored or completely shut out. For example, African-American women had long been forced out of the woman’s sphere into the male world of work and business. Yet by this time, if a black woman was to get ahead in the white world, she needed to conform to the white ideal. Much of the African-
American community developed an alternative to this, the New Negro Woman. Pictures of her reveal that at least in her appearance she closely resembled the white representations of the New Woman.\textsuperscript{45} Kathy Peiss argued that white, working-class women, like the Negro woman, created their own version of the New Woman. The working-class woman’s New Woman used clothing and a developing heterosocial environment to establish her image.\textsuperscript{46} These women had long been participants of the male sphere because they worked. However, they were interested in increasing self-fulfillment. The new avenues for them were not an education but were control over their money and free time. Another group left out of the New Woman image was the upper class. Women from the leisure class were still expected to be a display for their fathers’ or husbands’ wealth and status. They were more tightly constrained to stay within the mold of their woman’s sphere, even though their ideals had seemingly been on the periphery of the Cult of True Womanhood.\textsuperscript{47} Thus, it is apparent that there was no one image of the New Woman but rather a set of often conflicting and paradoxical ideas and options dictated by a variety of socioeconomic factors.

With that in mind this study focuses on the more prevalent image of the New Woman, which is one of white, Protestant, native-born, and middle-class origins. One of the chief things that this New Woman did that was formerly reserved for men, was to have a career. In fact, it was a lifetime commitment to a career that defined many New Women.\textsuperscript{48} They did not just work temporarily until they were married or to help support a husband; they worked in order to gain self-fulfillment and in many instances to use a college education. Still many college-educated women eventually did marry, though they often chose to work at their chosen profession before marriage.\textsuperscript{49} Even if they desired to continue their career after marriage, employers made it nearly impossible because it was inappropriate for a career
woman to have a family or for a wife and mother to have a career. If a woman chose a career she also chose to do without marriage and in the eyes of society without love.\textsuperscript{50}

The problem was that even with the New Woman's college education she was excluded from many professions and often from obtaining graduate degrees.\textsuperscript{51} However, many of the women who had attended college forged careers in areas where men had no interest or where employers could justify hiring women instead of men because women could be paid less.\textsuperscript{52} Teaching was an example of this practice. Women also gained a foothold in the teaching profession because they were seen as uniquely suited for the job by virtue of their True Woman characteristics of nurturing and morality. This seeming paradox within the New Woman image was not unusual. It was often the case that the New Woman stood for great changes but worked within the limits that society allowed.

This was also the case with another field dominated by women, social work, and in particular, the settlement houses such as Hull House in Chicago. Basically, no men wanted the job and women were again seen as uniquely suited to this type of work as it was in many ways a domestic field.\textsuperscript{53} The settlement houses were designed to teach new immigrant adults and children proper hygiene, household tasks, and a form of acculturation. All of these tasks had parallels with the tasks that the housewife might have performed for her family. Thus, once again the New Woman's activities were not as radical as even she might have wished. She was still a figure on the outside with only limited power and support to make strides towards the freedoms she sought.

However, this is not to say that she did not make some progress because there were new departures and advances for New Women in and through the field of social work. Through the settlement house, women fought for reforms such as sanitation and child labor
laws. Many of the women who took on these causes gained national recognition. By forging a career for themselves, the women who ran the settlement houses and those who used its halls to explore other avenues created a place for women in the professional world. They also many times helped develop and increase the status of a new field, such as social work.

The settlement houses also provided women who sought independence a place to live outside of the home. Unmarried True Women, or spinsters, were expected to live out their lives under the protection of some male relative; so by living in a communal setting they departed from the old ideal. In fact, even the language used to describe an unmarried woman of a certain age changed. They came to be called “bachelor girls” which had a more positive as well as masculine connotation. These bachelor girls usually worked in business or department stores and resided in halls or dormitories specifically designed for them. Whether in settlement houses or dormitories, women took a more active and visible role in the economic sphere. They no longer felt tied to their parents’ homes, although the majority of them who eventually married would revert to the accepted role of wife. So, in effect, much of what New Woman gained in independence and autonomy more directly benefited unmarried women. Married women certainly were not excluded from the new experiences enjoyed by women of this period; however, for the most part they did not participate in the same manner as unmarried women. It seems as if changes for women were more acceptable within a parental context rather than a marital context. In effect, it was the choice between love and having a career rearing its ugly head once again. Society seemed more ready to compromise with the New Woman before she was married.

The College Woman
A prime example of the freedoms enjoyed by the single New Woman was her attendance at one of the many women's and coeducational colleges founded after the Civil War. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg stated that the college experience defined the New Woman. The daughters of middle-class professionals and business men attended college more than those of the upper and lower classes. The upper classes preferred some form of finishing school for their daughters and the lower classes could rarely afford to send their daughters to college. These young collegians sometimes had educated mothers who wanted them to share a similar experience, and were instrumental in convincing fathers to allow their daughters to attend.

Smith-Rosenberg and other scholars delineate two generations of college women. The first generation began after the Civil War and continued into the 1890s when the women's colleges were newly founded and land grant universities began to admit women. These women, though few in number, roughly 0.7 to 2 per cent of the female population aged eighteen to twenty-one, are considered pioneers. They went to college at a time when Dr. Clarke's theories about the damage an education could do to the female anatomy were widely accepted. This was also a period in which the idea of separate spheres still had a foothold in the social fabric of the United States. A woman who went to college not only endangered her physical health and reproductive functions but also endangered the future of society. Many people felt that if larger numbers of women went to college it would create a situation tantamount to race suicide. During this period immigration increased as did fears about the types of immigrants entering the country. If the white, middle-class, Protestant woman destroyed her ability to propagate, then other groups could eventually take over the country. While illogical to the modern reader, these fears were very real to the college girl's
contemporaries. However, not only did the college woman endanger her country by attending college but many renowned scholars and university administrators feared the danger of a college girl becoming masculine. Above all of the other considerations against a women attending university was the belief that she did not possess the intelligence or ability to succeed in a completely scholarly setting.

Many women and women’s colleges set out to disprove this belief. Schools such as Bryn Mawr and Wellesely adhered to a classical education much like that available at Harvard. Bryn Mawr never had a preparatory system for those who could not quite make it, but rather expected its students to pass the Harvard or equivalent Bryn Mawr entrance exam. The other women’s colleges gradually did away with their preparatory systems. In this period, the state schools that admitted women did not yet have a “ladies’ course” and so most women competed on the same level as the men and did just as well or better. By the late 1880s, the many successful female academicians defended women’s capabilities against Clarke’s and others’ theories. By 1900, even people like Charles Eliot, the president of Harvard, had amended his negative opinion about women at the university. Initially, Eliot felt that because a woman’s natural propensities led to the domestic sphere she should not attend college as it was a masculine arena. While Eliot eventually allowed that women could attend university, he never wavered from the conviction that they should not pursue traditionally masculine professions as a result of that education. Still, the idea of separate spheres was not totally absent in the university setting, even institutions under the presidentship of women. Many women scholars still believed in the importance of the traditionally feminine career of homemaker.
The second generation began sometime around the mid-1890s and continued until the around World War I. This coincides with the advent and life span of the New Woman. A "linkage of gender consciousness to campus life," as well as greater push for egalitarian feminism distinguished the second generation. In this period female enrollments steadily increased and the percentage of the American female population aged eighteen to twenty-one attending had increased to 7.6 per cent by 1920. While this may seem a tiny percentage, the fact that by 1920 women comprised 47 per cent of all enrolled students puts it into proper perspective. More and more middle-class families saw the university as the answer to their daughters' futures. The women who went to college after 1890 are sometimes considered to have been less serious about their education and more inclined towards frivolous pursuits. This assessment is not altogether accurate. The college women of this period did exceptionally well in their studies; however, particularly around the turn of the century, there was a backlash against coeducation at many universities. The University of Wisconsin, the University of Chicago, and Michigan State University all felt that their women students were overwhelming the population of their campus. There was a fear that instead of women being in danger of masculinization, the masculine domain of the university as well as the male students were in danger of becoming feminine. Universities were especially concerned about the feminization of many liberal arts classes. What they failed to take into account was that men were taking other courses, such as engineering and the sciences because they afforded more lucrative career possibilities. Another possible reason behind the greater number of women in liberal arts classes was it was a subject with which women were already comfortable. Liberal Arts it meshed better with traditional gender roles. However ungrounded these fears, the universities decided that they needed to do something.
Some chose to limit female enrollment and to resegregate women into separate classes so that men would once again feel comfortable taking liberal arts classes.

Another change taking place in this period for women on college campuses all over the country was the introduction of home economics, hygiene, sanitation, and various social sciences into the curriculum. The forerunner of Home Economics began as the Ladies Course at Iowa State University in 1871, and by the 1880s many co-educational university had similar programs. Many of these courses were specifically designed for the female student. In one sense, these programs represented an effort on the part of female students to make a place for themselves in the scientific fields. However, they were also considered to be part of a woman's natural work and from the standpoint of the administration almost a safeguard against the destruction of traditional gender roles.

At about the turn of the century until about 1910, there seemed to be not only a turning back by the university toward an earlier time, but in some ways the female student population retrogressed. In the 1890s only about 50 to 60 per cent of female college graduates eventually married. However, after 1900 this figure began to slowly rise until it converged with the percentages for all women in the second and third decades. During this period many women who went to college planned to marry and have children rather than a career, or at least agonized over the decision between the two. Before 1910, combining work and marriage meant working prior to marriage, which approximately 80 per cent of graduates did. However, less than 10 per cent worked after marriage and even less after having children. Though, by the 1910s college women began to discuss ways to combine both career and marriage. For 1912 and 1914 graduates, the number of married women bearing children who worked after marriage more than doubled. Still, large numbers of graduates
married and assumed traditional roles, almost as if the idea of separate spheres had adjusted itself to the college environment rather than the college environment helping to dispel it. However, this does not in any way negate the gains made by women in this period. Certainly if universities were so afraid of women taking over their campuses then the women who went to college were accomplishing great things, whether or not they eventually pursued a career. The exception to this were the all women's colleges. While they did have parallel increases in enrollment, they obviously did not try to segregate women. They also continued to maintain a curriculum similar to schools such as Harvard, and an atmosphere that allowed the New Woman to "flourish" to a greater extent than women at a coeducational institution.71

Not only were women segregated through curriculum, but also within the various organizational and extracurricular activities on campus. Women were barred from student government, competitive sports, and many other traditional campus activities. In response, they formed their own parallel organizations and activities. This had both positive and negative effects on coeducational campuses. On the positive side it allowed women a way to fully participate in the college experience. Since they couldn't be on the "regular" student newspaper they formed their own. However, on the negative side this served to highlight and emphasize the idea of separate spheres that attending a university was supposed to be refuting. Many times once women formed their own organizations, they found it even harder when they decided they should be allowed to participate on an equal but not separate basis with men. At the schools where the activities were more integrated (I use the phrase loosely) women had a different problem: they had no real support group with which to identify. In such a situation, they had to deal with male hostility on an individual basis rather than as a group.
The one activity, whether required or extracurricular, that was always segregated by sex was athletics. The women’s colleges founded after the Civil War first introduced athletics or rather gymnastics. Initially, many colleges subscribed to the belief that some form of mild exercise was beneficial because it helped improve the maternal functions. This reasoning evolved, by the late nineteenth century, into the concept that exercise, specifically gymnastics, would counteract many of the ill effects of studying on the female body. By the 1880s, the most popular gymnastic systems were the German and Swedish programs. At their core, these systems were devoted to measuring the body and then attempting to correct the imperfections or weaknesses in each girl’s figure as defined by their system. One problem was the supposed frailty of the female body, particularly the female student’s body. In response to this problem, these systems stressed gaining weight to improve health and appearance.

Appearance and athletics were inextricably linked in a gender paradox during this period. On the one hand athletic programs proved that women, like men, did have and could use muscles making them healthy, more well-rounded individuals. Still, there was a fear that women’s increased athletic ability and participation would render them masculine. The idea that somehow a woman would lose her femininity through sports was a total reversal. Earlier experts held that exercise would increase a woman’s likelihood of maintaining her feminine attributes within the masculine domain of the university campus. This fear of the masculine woman and a subsequent blurring of gender roles also affected the manner in which women were allowed to participate in team sports. Basketball, which was increasingly popular by the turn of the century, received the most attention. Most colleges had special rules for women’s basketball designed to reduce players’ contact with one another and curb the competitive
nature of the sport. Thus, in this arena there was an obvious conflict between the gender characteristics associated with the accepted norm (which has its antecedents in the True Woman ideal) and what the New Woman was doing.

Another reason that many people had difficulty with women’s athletics was that in most cases it required a decidedly masculine form of dress. Most universities had a uniform for athletic activities that included a middy blouse and some form of bifurcated garment below the waist. These uniforms were worn during the majority of athletic activities; however, most schools and students felt that this uniform was still inappropriate for public appearances. Therefore, during those activities viewed by an outside audience women were required to exercise in gender appropriate clothing. Masculine styles in clothing were not limited to gym uniforms. The shirtwaist with a collar and tie appeared in realistic representations of women playing tennis and golf, riding bicycles, walking on the college campus, or studying for exams.

Mannishness in appearance and dress also appeared quite frequently in satirical representations of women students during this period, although by World War I it had tapered off considerably. The idea behind the satire was that if women attended college like men, how long would it be before they would dress and look like men, even unintentionally? In fact, the New Woman continually faced fears that she was becoming a man and that her appearance would follow suit. The only times women students were allowed to look like a man was when they played the male roles in amateur theatricals or at college dances at a single sex institution. Even then, the colleges limited how closely the young women could approximate male attire and appearance. Sherrie Inness documented that even the fiction of the day warned female students of the dire consequences of dressing like males. Certainly,
most of the women who attended college in this period had very little desire to appear or act as men, though they likely valued the greater freedom masculine clothing afforded them as they participated in many college activities. The fears of women looking like men were merely a projection of the general fear that the gender roles and characteristics that seemed so natural, even scientifically based, to an earlier generation were beginning to alter.

Another popular image of the New Woman, and as an extension the College woman, was Charles Dana Gibson's drawings of what became popularly known as the Gibson Girl. Many people, including Charlotte Perkins Gilman, herself an advocate of exercise and athletics for women saw, the Gibson Girl as a representation of the New Woman. Other illustrators produced similar images of women which I include in this discussion of the Gibson Girl. However, the Gibson Girl was rarely seen doing anything that could be construed as outside of a woman's sphere. The most prevalent image related to the idea of the New Woman are the representations of the Gibson Girl engaged in sporting activities. These are the images which Gilman identified with the New Woman. Even in these drawings the Gibson Girl was obviously wearing a corset and other traditional clothing items. In fact, the Gibson Girl as a student, a working girl, or even as an athletic girl were outweighed by the images of her as a debutante or a reigning beauty. However, she was at best an ambiguous image—the embodiment of contradictory ideals or perhaps a transitional figure. The Gibson Girl provided a safe image of the college girl, one that allayed fears of mannishness as a result of higher education. Most of the images that followed, such as the flapper, also showed that educated women did not necessarily produce drastic social change. The Gibson Girl merely “co-opted” those characteristics of New Women that seemed threatening.79
The next popular image went even further towards the New Woman, or maybe the New Woman actually progressed a little farther herself. In any case by 1913, the flapper started to replace the Gibson Girl as the most popular female image and representative of the New Woman. By the later 1910s, even women's fashions began to take on a decided "boyish" appearance with slim hips and shorter hairstyles gaining popularity. Banner discussed the fact that behaviors that would come to be associated with the flapper of the 1920s were beginning to appear among the young women of the late teens. The New Woman as the flapper was portrayed as aggressive and more likely to challenge the status quo than her predecessors. With these personality traits the flapper would have been considered a very masculine woman for her time, even without the short skirts. However, the term also generally referred to teenage girls.

The Media, Advertising and Women

Amidst all the changes that occurred in women's roles from the time of the True Woman to the emergence of the New Woman, one of the most significant was the solidification of women as the primary consumers in American society. Overall, during the period of this study, consumption to create the appearance of abundance and use of certain products and brand names to establish one's place in society became increasingly more common, especially among the middle-class. With the introduction of Domestic Science and a host of supposedly labor saving devices for the home, women's traditional role of homemaker merged with her newer role as consumer. Since this occurred before either radio or television entered homes, periodicals became the primary source for women to learn about this new role. Within the periodicals, advertising, editorial copy, fiction and non-fictional articles formed a partnership that helped reinforce and perpetuate this role.
The 1890s saw incredible growth in the number of periodicals published in the United States, due in part to numerous technological advances and other changes that resulted in cheaper subscription rates. The biggest change was the introduction of paid advertising to offset the costs of production rather than relying completely on the income from subscriptions. Some of the technological advances included the introduction of the rotary press, which allowed for faster and more efficient production at a lower cost. Another significant advance, the introduction of photoengraving, allowed magazines to reproduce better quality photographs and illustrations in color. Photoengraving allowed magazines to place an even greater emphasis on visual copy without increasing subscription rates. The United States Post Office also contributed to the growing periodical industry by lowering the postal rates for periodicals in the later part of the nineteenth century and introducing rural free delivery in 1898. All of these factors contributed to making magazine subscriptions an affordable expenditure for the middle-class woman.

However, while on the surface magazines were merely a leisure time activity, they also had a significant impact on women’s perceptions of their world and their place within it. One of the most important influences in magazines was advertising. It was likely the most prominent feature in most magazines by 1900, thanks to the pioneering efforts of Edward Bok, editor of the *Ladies Home Journal* from 1889 until 1919. In fact, many magazines mailed their issues with the advertising pages, usually at the back of the magazine, pre-cut. The rest of the pages had to be cut before reading, thus fostering a method of reading that emphasized ads over more substantive copy. Eventually, the advertising was interspersed throughout the magazine, making it a more powerful force, especially when advertisers were given a voice in how their ads were placed in conjunction to the articles and fiction. In this
sense, advertisers and editors, conspired to give legitimacy to the role of woman as consumer, as a subtext to her traditional role in home.

For the most part, companies wanted to place their advertisements in magazines that presented women's primary role as a wife, mother and homemaker. This type of magazine was not difficult to find. The *Ladies Home Journal*, arguably the most important magazine of this period, under the influence of Edward Bok, consistently emphasized that women belonged in the home. Bok also believed that women needed help to effectively manage both their role as homemaker and as consumer, and that it was his job or rather the *Journal*'s job to provide it. This attitude meshed with that of the majority of advertising firms during this period, who believed along with the editors and publishers that, "advertising was a positive social good, a means of improving the masses." For women "magazines were a trade press" and advertisements were important in order to learn about products for their trade. Still, there were contradictions in advertisers' views of its primary consumers, women, and the ads they wrote. For instance, ads usually conveyed the idea that women were natural, efficient and effective consumers for their household, while at the same time the ad writers believed that they must be spoon-fed information in order to make correct choices. Regardless of ad writers' beliefs about women's intelligence women were still the ones commonly viewed as consistent and avid readers of advertisements.

Magazines did not, however, consist entirely of advertisements but contained articles, editorial copy, fiction, and miscellaneous other items. All of these very different components could contribute to the personality of an individual magazine. Edward Bok accomplished this very thing in the *Ladies Home Journal*. He believed the editor should be a personal and direct influence on his magazine. In order to accomplish this for the Journal, he solicited
articles and stories from designated writers and let his personal viewpoints show in this as well as in the editorial copy. In fact, with his conservative views regarding women’s roles, Bok allowed very little into his magazine that spoke positively of changes in women’s roles and certainly nothing pro-suffrage. College girls and higher education did make semi-frequent appearances on the pages of *LHJ*, but the articles never supported education as a path to change. Still for Bok to even include college girls’ stories and articles, it is likely that he saw them and their mothers as current and potential readers of his magazine. Other magazines, such as *The Delineator* and *Good Housekeeping*, used many of the ideas and methods Bok introduced in the *Ladies Home Journal*, which as the first American magazine to reach circulation of million, certainly deserved the emulation. In the pages of these magazines lie some insights into the interaction between the True Woman and the New Woman and where the college woman fit into that relationship.

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3 Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 173.
5 Harris, 33.
7 Welter, *Dimity Convictions*, 31; Cott, 67-70; Harris, 33-34.
8 Welter, “Cult of True Womanhood,” 162; Lerner 11-12; Cott, 61-62; Harris, 35-40; Theriot, 32-34.
9 Harris, 48-50; Welter, *Dimity Convictions*, 22-24.
10 Cott, 67.
12 Lerner, 12-13.
13 Berg, 68-71.
14 Cott, 118-125; Harris, 51-56.
15 Cott, 118.
16 Theriot, 74-76.
17 Cott, 125.
18 Welter, *Dimitry Convictions*, 34-5.
19 Welter, *Dimitry Convictions*, 34-37; Cott, 118-125.
21 Theriot, 72.
23 Theriot, 72-75.
25 The term “Real Woman” is Cogan’s invention not a word used in contemporary literature.
27 Cogan, 74-75.
28 Cogan, 31-58.
29 Cogan, 58-59.
31 Verbrugge, 28-48.
32 Cogan, 67.
33 See endnotes 18 & 19.
34 Cogan, 95.
35 Cogan, 76-79.
37 Cogan, 81-2, 88-9.
38 Cogan, 100.
41 Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 177-179; Rudnick, 75-78; Schneider & Schneider, 142.
42 Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 257.
47 Ammons, 89-92.
49 Rosenberg, *Divided Lives*, 25; Schneider & Schneider, 52-53.
51 Solomon, 128-130, 138.
52 Schneider & Schneider, 51.
55 Kerber, 34.
56 Welter, *Dimity Convictions*, 31, 37.
57 Forrey, 45.
58 Schneider & Schneider, 43-53.
60 Solomon, 66-68.
61 Solomon, 64.
64 Solomon, 63-64.
65 Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate*, 42-44.
66 Solomon, 85.
74 Atkinson, 50; Inness, 104.
75 Atkinson, 50.
77 Scheier, 6.
79 Patterson, 74.
80 Banner, 176.
87 Garvey, 11.
89 Garvey, 172.
92 Damon-Moore, 68.
93 Scanlon, 225.
94 Garvey, 172-174.
95 Garvey, 174-178 and the endnote on 219.
CHAPTER 3. METHOD

Smith-Rosenberg noted that women's history is more difficult to expose because women do not appear in public places or official documents. Thus to obtain information about women's lives it is necessary to look in alternative places. Smith-Rosenberg suggested a model consisting of three parts to provide a fuller image of the middle-class woman. The three parts are a demographic and economic background, prescriptive definitions and expressions of behavior and personality, and actual behavior and feelings. For the New Woman as college student, who for the most part was a member of the middle-class, the model seems appropriate. In this study, the emphasis will be on the second two categories of Rosenberg's model because extensive demographic studies of college women already exist. Actual behavior and feelings will hopefully be found in the many personal documents that the middle-class college women produced, such as diaries and correspondence. Rosenzweig states that a young college student, Hilda Worthington Smith, argued through her letters, with her mother about clothes among other things.

This information needs to be contrasted with that found in the prescriptive literature, as stated in the model, to provide a well-rounded picture of the New Woman. Prescriptive literature does not necessarily reflect actual behavior. However, the actual behavior of the New Woman existed within the same culture that produced the prescriptive literature, therefore its influence cannot be discounted. It is likely that while the prescriptive literature did not completely reflect any single "New Woman," it did comprise at least some ideals of the female population at that time. However, there was never just one reality for all women; each woman's reality included different components of the prescriptive literature's representation of the New Woman.
Since periodicals were such a prevalent and popular form of media by the end of the nineteenth century, they formed the basis for the prescriptive literature discussed in the model. Periodicals might not only contain articles about college women but could also give fashion advice and carry advertisements directed to the college woman. Similarly, periodicals could also contain articles and advertisements focused on the New Woman. Mott’s survey of periodicals and Mary Ellen Waller-Zuckerman’s article helped determine which of the many existing magazines college women were likely to have read.  

According to Waller-Zuckerman there were six leading periodicals for middle-class women during the period of my study, with the Ladies Home Journal paramount in terms of popularity and financial success. The other five were McCall’s, The Delineator, Good Housekeeping, Pictorial Review, and Woman’s Home Companion. The three magazines that were the best fit for my research were The Ladies Home Journal, Good Housekeeping, and The Delineator. All three magazines were marketed to the middle-class woman and their editors expressed definite attitudes toward the education of women.  

Once I had determined the periodicals to use, I began a thorough survey of each issue for all three magazines for the years 1895-1920, with one exception. The years 1898-1901 were not available for Good Housekeeping. I looked for articles, advertisements, pictures, fashion editorials, and anything else that seemed applicable to college woman and the New Woman. These were photocopied. The next step was organizing them in notebooks by year and by periodical for analysis at a later date.
However, these periodicals alone would provide an incomplete overview of the prescriptive literature available on college and New Women. Additional searches, under a wide variety of headings, including fashion, clothing, women, college girls, and women in education, were conducted in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* to unearth articles not found in my initial survey. These methods produced a wide range of articles for the years of the study, both about the New Woman and college women. Many of the articles about New Women were found in what could be called "literary and current events periodicals," such as *Scribner's Magazine* and *Atlantic Monthly*. This type of magazine also published articles about college women. The greatest percentage of material found in periodical sources was published from 1900 until 1916. There seemed to be a limited amount of information from 1895 to 1900, although the New Woman does appear fairly consistently in the literature from 1895 onwards, partly because the term was coined in 1894. The articles on the college woman and New Woman declined steadily during World War I, only to return around 1919.

At this point a search of the local library catalog and World Cat was conducted for other relevant primary sources, since the definition of prescriptive literature includes books as well as periodicals. Within the time span when the bulk of the periodical material was published, there seemed to be a corresponding proliferation of both fiction and nonfiction books. Many of the nonfiction books are either advice books to young women about to enter college or books about the consequence of the higher education for women. Sometimes information about the dress and practices of college women, as well as New Woman, appeared in the etiquette books of the period. However, time constraints limited the thoroughness of my investigation into this type of literature. There are also
many fictional books that have college girls as their central characters or that describe the supposed true “frolics” of college girls at many of the “better” colleges, such as Vassar. All of these types of sources discussed, in various guises, the dress of college women.

However, in accordance with Smith-Rosenberg’s method, I wanted not only prescriptive literature but also information about actual women’s thoughts and dress in order to obtain a more objective impression of college women. Since the majority of women who went to college in this period were deceased by 1997-98, the logical step was to visit archives that contained these women’s personal papers. Looking through diaries, correspondence, and scrapbooks would provide information about what these women thought about college and about dress. The obvious archives to use for this study were those of the Seven Sister colleges of New England. However, since the graduates of these colleges have been studied extensively, I decided to explore relatively new territory by looking at women’s experiences in Midwestern, coeducational, public and private institutions. Archives for this geographic area were a little more difficult to locate.

The first of three archives chosen was Iowa State University for reasons of convenience as well as the fact the ISU admitted women almost from its founding in 1868. The second archive chosen was Oberlin College. This college was the first coeducational college in the United States; it admitted women in 1837. In addition, the Oberlin Archives website contained an extensive listing of personal papers of women who had attended Oberlin within the years of the study. The third archive was more difficult to determine. In the end, after consulting reference books cataloging the holdings of archives in the United States I determined that the quickest and simplest way
...to choose my third archive was to use World Cat, which has millions of entries from all over the world. With the aid of a keyword search for “women” and “college,” World Cat produced a list of hundreds of entries from which those that appeared most frequently could be selected. In the end, the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana was the best option in the predetermined geographic region.

Having chosen the archives, visits of two to three days were scheduled at each location. Each archive contained a different assortment of primary sources, including letters, diaries, and scrapbooks written by women within the period. Student handbooks, dormitory rules, and any other type of college booklet that might contain dress codes, were read, though in general they did not yield any pertinent information. Yearbooks were a consistently available source, but the information in these was very hard to pin down, especially in terms of authorship.

The Iowa State University Archives has a unique source applicable to this study: The Mary Barton Collection, consisting of an extensive number of fashion plates, magazines, catalogs, and articles related to women and clothing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This collection supplied additional examples of clothing and advice for the college woman and provided some pages missing from issues of the three periodicals forming the bulk of the data for this study. Some of the Ladies Home Journal color fashion plates found in this archive had only been previously available to me on microfilm. Another valued source from the Mary Barton collection were several issues of a magazine entitled Madame which billed itself as the “Official Press Department Organ of the National Council of Women.” However, since it is doubtful whether Madame had an extensive readership or circulation it is more logical to begin discussing the media and
its portrayal of the college woman as the “New Woman” with the more widely circulated periodicals, the *Ladies Home Journal, The Delineator*, and *Good Housekeeping*.

2 Cookingham wrote two articles see earlier notes.
4 Rosenzweig, 11.
6 See endnote 16 in Chapter 1 for Mott; Waller-Zuckerman, 1-4.
CHAPTER 4. THE DEPICTION OF WOMEN’S COLLEGE LIFE

Surprisingly, college women were a favorite human-interest topic in all three of the women’s magazines studied. There were frequent articles covering all aspects of college life. Generally, these articles can be divided into separate groups, each representing a unique attitude towards the college girl and her chosen school. One of the more popular attitudes that these three magazines introduced was that college life was one big social event for young ladies. One type of article that particularly exemplified this perspective appeared in both *Ladies Home Journal* and *The Delineator*, and centered on college larks or pranks. These articles, really a series of short anecdotes or stories, gave glimpses of the college girl in her environment. The “larks” articles informed the reader on a variety of topics in an entertaining format. They answered questions such as “What does the college girl do for fun?” “How does she interact with other students?” “What about her classes?” “Sports?” “Other extracurricular activities?” They recounted any number of other things that showed readers the world of the college girl. *The Ladies Home Journal*’s articles were often true stories written by current students or recent graduates. Although *The Delineator* did not definitely state whether their stories were true, it seems likely, given their insiders’ viewpoints, that they were also written by students. I will refer to all stories that equate college attendance to four years of socializing as “larks” stories because, regardless of title, the content was very similar. *The Delineator* “larks” articles soon changed to a monthly column, entitled “College News”. While *The Delineator* was taking a more informational tack with their new column, *LHJ* continued to publish college girl or “larks” stories until 1910. Though indicating that the author had attended or was attending college, *LHJ* never mentioned a
specific institution, thus giving the stories universal appeal. The stories in LHJ had a
definite leaning towards extracurricular activities and social interactions, with an
emphasis on humor. They were generally only a few paragraphs long and many times
dealt with girls skirting school rules. One such anecdote involved a young woman
smuggling her fiancé into a masked Halloween party. When the Matron of the house
discovered the party it was necessary for the young man to make good his escape.
However, not before taking off his mask and kissing the matron right on the lips.³

While many articles were devoted to college girl’s pleasurable pursuits,
seemingly an equal amount of space was filled with concern for her well-being. This
concern for college girls’ health took the stance that the young ladies were overtaxing
themselves, mostly because of the proportion of extracurricular and social pastimes in
which they engaged versus time spent in academic pursuits.⁴ Many of the articles dealing
with this issue were published at the same time as the “larks” articles. This is intriguing
because it seems to point to a still-prevalent controversy that had supposedly been
resolved: the dangers of women attending university. The anxieties of a previous
generation took the form of medical advice. The belief was that too much education
permanently ruined a women’s health and prevented her from fulfilling her duty to
procreate.⁵ By the 1890s, the first generation of college women had for the most part
disproved these medical theories. In fact, one author stated that, “It is a safe assertion
that the girl who is not strong enough to go to college is not strong enough to bear
children who will be much credit to the race.”⁶

However, Scribner’s Magazine published an article in 1897, entitled “The
Unquiet Sex: The Woman Collegian,” which introduced a new concern regarding the
health of the average college girl. This article discussed many facets of college life, all of which seemed to impair a young woman’s personality or health in some way. In the section dealing exclusively with physical health, Helen Watterson Moody, a journalist who graduated from the University of Wooster in 1883, wrote that young girls seemed to have a total disregard for their physical well being. College girls did what they wanted, including staying up until all hours, eating the wrong things, worrying about their attire and in general failing to get proper exercise. An article in Good Housekeeping lists three faults to which college girls were inclined: “extravagance in expenditure and dress; carelessness of health; and lack of preparation for wise adult living.” In the article, one girl stated that she could either study or rehearse for her part in the dramatics but not do both. The conclusion the author reached after hearing such an admission was that,

the strain of lessons and all of the ‘outside things’ together is too much; so far that many a girl breaks down under it and drops out a week now and then for rest at some quiet place...those who stay in college look tired out when apparently there is no reason for it.

The author believed that the primary aim of the college should be character, then health, and finally academics. Until World War I the idea persisted that it was not too much study that hurt the young girl, but rather the entire college lifestyle, from living in dormitories with other girls to parties with fudge and popcorn. Le Baron Russell Briggs, Dean of Harvard University, wrote,

There are more girls who break down because they lack the sense to see that they cannot at the same time lead a life actively intellectual and a life actively social. Overwork at college is quite different from overwork in college studies...Commonly it is caused by theatricals, dances, music, athletics, making (and eating) fudge.

He further maintained that college boys also tended to confuse their priorities but with less danger to their health because they could better ignore their conscience. Or in other
words, women were more likely to feel guilt regarding any slight lapse in judgement or attention to their studies. I do not know how accurate this assessment was but it was certainly not very flattering to men of the period.

In a similar vein, an article in the March 1910 issue of *The Delineator*, written by a woman college graduate, Madeline Z. Doty, states that college is a “four years’ course in amusements, with a little social training on the side.”13 While not necessarily expressing concern over a young college student overtaxing herself with fun and academics, the author seems to be concerned that college was one big party and that the average student gained little valuable knowledge. While Doty did state that college girls devoted at least one half of their time to academic pursuits, she concluded that the knowledge gained had very little bearing on life in the “real world” since she was not allowed to do anything with her education. The degree she received was merely a decoration, which had little to do with her actual future.14 This statement by Doty seems to clarify why the majority of the article was dedicated to describing the many parties, social events and other amusing activities in which college girls participated on a regular basis. It is quite an extensive list, especially considering that restrictions for girls would have been greater during this period than today. This article actually resulted in a deluge of letters voicing protest over Doty’s conclusions.15

One article in *LHJ* actually refuted the idea that the activities of college life were detrimental. The president of Smith College stated that “where health has failed the failure can generally be traced to some cause apart from college requirements.”16 An earlier article, written by a woman who spent three months with Smith students, supported this statement. This article discussed the health of the girls in regard to diet,
exercise, and discipline. The article had a very positive and reached the conclusion that the "new '1906 model' of the American girl is so well balanced, so well oiled with good sense, good breeding, and good health that one hears none of that wretched clatter of emotions so wearing in other types." The article expressed no concern about the extinction of the home or about whether women were learning proper skills for their ultimate career in the home, just an informative article about college life and how it actually improved the health and personality of young women. Another author came to a similar, positive conclusion, which she supported by stating that statistics showed young ladies had gained in height, strength and weight since they began attending college.

Some areas of college life were believed to contribute proportionally more to the overall health and personality of the college girl. One of the more important was athletics. Granted, athletics or gymnastics for women in this period were in no way identical to the men's version. However, in many ways they were quite as much a contradiction of previously held beliefs about women's abilities as learning Latin. One author even connected athletic and academic ability, saying that often the athletic girl was also at the head of her class. Clearly, the average college girl enjoyed a variety of athletic endeavors, either as a participant or as a spectator. Many schools had gymnastic programs, as well as organized sports, and the girls benefited from both. Gymnastics in this period were a series of exercises designed for each individual in order to remedy personal physical flaws or deficiencies, such as a weak back or sloping shoulders. This type of activity had few opponents because it was generally considered a much-needed solution to physical problems that existed under the guise of the True Woman. Organized sports, on the other hand, had both proponents and detractors.
Much of the literature that expressed a dissenting opinion about the benefits of sport did so with the fear that the “spirit of athletics has crept into gymnasium work, and that muscularity is encouraged at the expense of the kind of development that is especially needed by women.”23 Basically, the only physical abilities many writers thought women needed were those that had a direct relationship with her ability to procreate.24 Another concern was that playing team sports, such as basketball, encouraged competitiveness. The origins of these concerns can be traced to the fact that each feared trait was a traditionally masculine characteristic. To solve this problem schools adjusted the rules for women in an attempt to limit the competitive spirit.25 The girls competed against classmates, such as freshmen against sophomores, but not in an intercollegiate system as the men did. However, regardless of how the rules were altered to reduce risk to the girls, they still felt and acted competitively on the court and in the bleachers.26

Overriding all of these specific gender related concerns was the additional concern that women were more likely than men to “overdo” when playing sports.27 They might continue playing even though injured, or expend too much energy in athletic activities to the detriment of other requirements.28 The idea that women could so easily overdo was also somewhat gender-related. Many writers pointed to men, or rather brothers, as the culprits, saying that women were only doing what they had seen their male relatives do when playing a sport. However, while competition was seen as inappropriate, the spirit of teamwork and unity that inevitably came with playing organized sports was considered a new and beneficial trait for young ladies.29
A related concern about athletics was the semi-masculine dress required for most activities. Most institutions had a uniform consisting of short bloomers and a blouse or sweater depending upon the time of year. While many saw the relaxed dress as a healthful choice, others were concerned about women appearing too masculine. Colleges dealt with this concern by not allowing any men at the games other than the male faculty. All of the underlying ideas about the differences between men and women and gender appropriate behavior were exemplified by college women playing organized sports; it was a popular topic in the literature.

Certainly, different opinions about college girls and their activities flew fast and furiously across the pages of the literature during this period. However, not every article expressed a definitive viewpoint. Many times the magazines published purely informational articles. *The Delineator* devoted substantial of copy to descriptions of college life in its various aspects. They would pick a topic, such as student-faculty relations or college traditions, and give at least a paragraph to each university. *Good Housekeeping* tended to publish only articles about schools with domestic science departments but usually made them as unbiased and informational in tone as possible. Occasionally though, they published something with a slightly different tone, such as one article, ostensibly written to show the differences between various colleges for women, which managed to interject a certain amount of purely feminine information. The “style” or personality of the student body of each university was much discussed in the article while still providing information in an objective manner. This method of discussing women and their colleges occurred fairly often in the literature. I am not sure whether Harvard and Yale were discussed in terms of their style of person and dress.
How to make money to attend college or pay for living expenses while enrolled was another aspect of magazines’ interest in the college woman. Since at times the magazines were somewhat undecided about the ultimate value of an education for women, the space spent in telling girls how they, too, could go to college was in some ways contradictory, especially from the *Ladies Home Journal*. The *Journal* actually had a well-advertised scholarship program linked to selling certain numbers of subscriptions. It also printed articles with other ideas for earning money for a college education. *Good Housekeeping* had a whole series on how different girls had managed to earn college money. The “benefactor” also appears in a variety of places, whether as a relative, or as the unknown person in the fictional “Daddy Long Legs” story.\(^3\) An Oberlin student whose letters I read had an uncle who provided for her tuition as well as some expenses.\(^4\)

The *Ladies Home Journal* tended towards opinion articles in their copy but they did run a pictorial series in 1902 on various aspects of college life compiled by Carolyn Halstead, the author of the “College News” column in *The Delineator*. The series included six installments, starting December 1901 and ending in May 1902. The first installment took a general look at groups of college girls, in essence group photographs. The next five installments were athletics, music and drama, fun in the college girls’ room, classes and studies, and finally graduation. Each installment took two full, ledger size pages. That *LHJ* took this tack regarding college girls is interesting since generally they expressed more concern than the other two periodicals with traditional gender roles and how college might affect a girl’s acceptance of her place in the home and family. In fact, even most of the fictional stories featuring college girls reinforced the idea that even though they went to college, women should still fulfill traditional gender roles.
I will use the term girl as it was used consistently throughout this period by authors, professors and the students themselves. Only very rarely were female college students called women.


See endnote 3.


“Some College Girl Follies,” *Good Housekeeping* 49 (September 1909): 238.


Briggs, 85.


Doty, 209, 265.

“We Knew It,” *Ladies Home Journal* 75 (June 1910): Table of contents page.


University Professor, “When a Girl is at College,” *Ladies Home Journal* 27 (September 1909): 32


Mullett, 6.


Goucher, 12.

Goucher, 564-566.

Schreier, 14.

Alice Katherine Fallows, “Basket Ball: A Builder-up of Vigorous Women,” *Good Housekeeping* 34 (March 1902): 197; Rickert, 12.


Rickert, 12.

Fallows, “Basket Ball,” 198.

Schreier, 14.


Jean Webster, “Daddy Long-Legs: A College Girl’s Letters to a Man She Didn’t Know,” *Ladies Home Journal* 29 (April 1912): 11-12, 81-83. The story was continued every month through September.

Oberlin Archives, Mabel Louise Shaw letters.
CHAPTER 5. THE COLLEGE WOMAN AND TRADITIONAL ROLES

By 1895, middle-class, white women attending college had become a part of American life. There were many pioneers in the 1870s and 1880s who helped bring about an acceptance of women's presence at universities across the country. However, until after World War I, discussions of the appropriateness of a college education for women were still prominent in periodicals. Many people were concerned about how college attendance affected women's personalities, their goals, and their eventual acceptance of traditional feminine roles. There was a general affirmation that some women needed to learn in order to support themselves but at the same time a firm belief that most women wanted marriage and would marry in spite of a college education. The controversy raged over the value of higher education to a future housewife. At the heart of the debate was the question: Did a college education aid her or teach her so much extraneous information that she could not boil water?

The *Ladies Home Journal* was by far the most vociferous in its fears for the young lady collegian. It was one of the more conservative periodicals in its views on women's roles and behavior during the period of this study. Many of these attitudes were an extension of the views of the editor, Edward Bok who, while allowing a certain amount of liberalty in the pursuit of circulation numbers, really believed that women belonged in the home. This sentiment was borne out by the college woman's first appearance (within the period of this study) in the May 1895 issue of *Ladies Home Journal*. The article, a prime example of the debate, written by Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, D.D., dealt with the pros and cons of college training for women. The general viewpoint of the article was that college training must provide women with skills that
related to their ultimate purpose, wife and motherhood. There was nothing wrong with women attending college, Rev. Parkhurst asserted, but rather a college for women must be distinctly feminine and "must have for its effect to foster among its students the tendency to become homemakers." Thereafter, in whatever context--positive, negative or somewhere in between--the college woman did make extensive appearances within the pages of the *Ladies Home Journal*. Over the years of this study college women's presence in the magazine increased decidedly, with some tapering off in the late 1910s, probably attributable to the US involvement in World War I, when space typically allocated to college women was taken up by war concerns.

All of the periodicals showed a similar increase was present in all, although the college woman's manifestations varied by periodical. The focus and readership of each magazine had much to do with the particular aspects of the college woman's life and personality that dominated the copy. For instance, *The Delineator* was the last magazine to take a particularly preachy tone about traditional roles for women. However, the college woman was present in *The Delineator* from the first year of this study, but in a more neutral or rather less biased tone. The early articles in *The Delineator* dealing with the college woman read more like brochures for colleges. The first three were in fact completely informational in tone. They were detailed descriptions of some of the prominent coeducational universities of the period, such as Cornell, University of Wisconsin, and University of Michigan. Every aspect of college life was covered, but very few judgements were made about any of the schools. Then, starting in 1899, *The Delineator* began running a monthly column entitled "College News," written by Carolyn Halsted. This column covered something different every month from college dramatics to
inter-class amenities (those between different graduating classes). The aim of the column was to compare a variety of different colleges and universities, both coeducational and all-girls’ schools.

Eventually, these informational columns began to change and develop a more insistent tone regarding the effect college life had on women. These columns also began to introduce more controversial topics such as ‘‘The College Woman Versus the Non-college Woman.’’ This article discussed both the negative and positive effects of college life on a girl, by contrasting her with the non-college girl. The article encouraged correct decisions regarding a young girl’s future because not every woman needed a college degree to help her in life. However, the writer did dispute the idea that a college-educated woman was a danger to the existence of the home and family. Halsted quoted statistics that showed a lesser incidence of divorce and infant mortality in homes where the wife and mother was a college graduate. While there is no way of knowing how valid and reliable the studies were that produced these results, it did show that at this point there was limited anxiety expressed in The Delineator that educated women would disregard their traditional roles.

The general idea that women were intended and ultimately destined to be wives and mothers appeared in almost every article discussing the appropriateness of the college curriculum for women. The Ladies Home Journal and, in a more limited manner, both The Delineator and Good Housekeeping, eventually promoted the idea that a standard college education might be deficient for the modern woman. Certainly, advice books written to incoming freshman girls reinforced the idea that colleges should not deter women from fulfilling their primary and biological duty. The advice books along
with the magazines also promoted the concept that innate physical and emotional
differences between women and men required different approaches in academic as well
as extracurricular areas. These differences were not only considered biological but also
linked to their supposed futures, men with a career and women, usually, with
homemaking.

However, before a young lady could ever be responsible for a home and family
she needed to attract the attention of a young man. The concern about whether men
would even marry college-educated women, led to discussions about the attractiveness of
college girls' behaviors and personalities. Many magazines conducted informal surveys
where they asked a question, such as "Does the college-educated girl make the best
wife?" and wrote articles detailing the more popular answers. The two answers to this
question, yes or no, were based on different individuals' opinions about how college
attendance influenced a girl's personality and her relationships with the opposite sex. The
positive view was that a college educated girl made a better wife, not necessarily
housekeeper or homemaker, but a better wife in terms of her interaction with her husband
on a personal and intellectual level as well as a better mother to her children. One author
studied the incidence of divorce among college women versus non-college women and
found that college women divorced at a lower rate than non-college graduates did. While
I have no way to assess the accuracy and reliability of her findings she did theorize that
college women were more particular in who and when they married. In conclusion, she
stated that the college educated woman, "inspires [her husband's] respect and admiration
as well as his love, and proves herself an efficient helpmeet in the exigencies of the
economic and social complexities of modern life."
The positive views, especially, were inextricably linked to the ongoing single sex or segregated versus co-educational debate taking place in the literature. In point of fact, authors believed a girl who had attended a co-educational university had an even greater advantage over her counterpart at a single sex institution. According, to an 1899 article in *LHJ*, the co-educated girl married more often than the graduate of an all-female school did.\(^9\) Many writers felt that a young lady who attended a university with the opposite sex had a more realistic and natural view of men and interacted more comfortably with them.

In *The Delineator’s* “College News” column for March 1902, the author quoted the woman’s dean for the University of Michigan, Dr. Eliza Mosher, who felt that “‘Life between the two sexes is more natural and healthful when they come in contact with each other hourly and without unnatural restrictions.’”\(^10\) However, any college-educated woman could more fully meet her husband’s emotional and psychological needs. She understood when he spoke about his job and concerns outside of the home. She was able to give knowledgeable and well thought out advice and in every way be more of a helpmeet to her husband. As an article in *Good Housekeeping* stated,

> It is not what the girl learns in college, or in preparation for it, of actual Latin or Philosophy that trains her for living. It is the experience she gains. It is the experienced woman who makes the most valuable friend and the most companionable wife.

The article further asserted that “should she marry, she ought to make a fascinating wife, and a competent, brainy and attractive mother.”\(^11\) It seems as if the growing college attendance of women contributed to changes in long-held ideas about the marital relationship. During this period society’s concept of marriage began to evolve; married couples were friends and lived in the same world, or rather where their separate spheres overlapped allowing more mutual experiences. Therefore, they understood one another...
better and did not feel as Smith-Rosenberg posited about 19th century marriage that they were tied to an outsider or alien.12

While considerable support for this viewpoint existed, others challenged the idea that college improved a young lady’s chances of marriage. In fact, in the articles that solicited readers’ opinions, almost no one said that college women made better wives. The respondents to the informal survey in Good Housekeeping seemed to find fault with her every characteristic and related those faults to problems in her marriage. It is interesting to note, however, that none of these respondents was married to a college graduate and some were even women. Those who felt that college girls made poor wives seemed to think they made poor women first. Respondents called them socially inept, intolerant, arrogant and many other things.13 In addition, those who held these opinions also believed college women made poor housekeepers, further reducing their desirability as wives. None of this seems to mesh with information from actual young ladies, especially the social ineptness and intolerance.

Some of the fault may lie with the standards to which college women were held. In an article in the Ladies Home Journal an unnamed professor asserted that more is expected of the college girl than of the college boy. She is the embodiment of social grace in the school; she has the standing of the institution, socially, to maintain; she is always under the surveillance of scores of eyes who take note of her every act. In other words the college girl is placed on a pedestal and is observed at close range…14

As late as December 1919, in the LHJ article “From a Father to His Daughter at College” the author assigned women the task of guarding morals and having a softening effect on the male population.15 So, even after two generations of college attendance and
successful careers, women were still held to a higher standard than men, or in other words the “True” Woman lived on.

This movement into the masculine sphere, through halls of academia, created a heartfelt concern for the future of the American family. Many felt that even if young men still found them attractive, college girls would not find the idea of marriage attractive. This really seemed to be a misplaced but prevalent fear in the literature. Article after article sought to dispel this belief, by showing evidence that college girls were as interested in marriage as their non-college sisters. One article in *LHJ* written by a graduate stated that she was unmarried, not from lack of desire but lack of opportunity. She felt that because of her degree people had the wrong impression about her desires for a husband and family. Also, because she did get a job after graduation, she did not actually meet many desirable men and certainly would have married if given the opportunity. Another college graduate expressed no regrets about deciding to marry and have a family rather than a career. Her husband apparently waited patiently for her to take some time to teach and understand that she loved him. Unlike his peers, he seemed to have had no qualms about marrying a college graduate. In other articles, asking men if they would marry a college graduate, they seemed to be afraid that her expectations for financial, home and job security were higher than those of the non-college graduate. In fact, there seemed to be an almost universal belief that the college girl tended towards “snobbishness”. It was feared that her four years in academia made her look down not only upon a woman’s traditional role in the home but the rest of the uneducated world, including men. So, beyond the fact that many girls went to college because they had to support themselves or wanted a career, it may also have been that
college girls married less often because men were intimidated or uncomfortable with a woman more educated than themselves.

The idea that college girls did not have any interest in marriage may have been more a reaction to the changes in traditional roles that college girls represented than of actual facts regarding collegian marriages. The college campus was considered a world unto itself, one that did not prepare young ladies for marriage or any other useful function. Though many thought college educated and broadened a girl’s perspective, it was not seen as entirely relevant to the realities of her future. Authors believed that even the career-bound collegians needed the idealism and useless knowledge “knocked out” of them by the business world. Still, by the end of this period, magazines published considerable advice concerning career opportunities for women and how to achieve their goals. *Good Housekeeping* and *The Delineator* both ran a series of articles with information and advice about various careers that young ladies might choose, such as medicine, law, and business. In many instances, the advice seemed almost naïve, considering the difficulties women faced in entering traditional male fields. However, the majority of the advice seemed to be centered on new business prospects for the college graduate in fields that were becoming more and more feminized, such as secretarial and stenographic positions, as well as settlement work. There were, in fact, articles citing evidence that employers looked for college educated women.

The problem many women faced, both in terms of financial and career success, was the belief that women did belong in the home and would eventually leave their jobs for marriage. Fictional stories reinforced this choice, either by showing women unhappy with a career or, once married, succumbing to the lure of the home and gladly
relinquishing her career.²⁴ Maybe the real crux of the problem was that women were not allowed to have both a family and a career. Society made sure that a woman felt she could not work or rather that she should not want to work, once she married. As a result, most employers did not consider women long term employees.²⁵ Still, the advice to graduates about career choices increased over the years of this study. Often fathers took the lead in concerns over a daughter’s choice of studies and whether it would allow them to support themselves if the occasion arose.²⁶

There was, however, greater concern for the future of girls who did not need to work to support themselves or their family. Invariably, parents expected these young ladies to return home after graduation. Actually, many graduates who aspired to careers, but did not need to work, were still expected to return to the bosom of their family. So, there were basically three choices open to a graduate: marriage, career, or home to her parents. The manner in which many college graduates were supposed to take up their life at home, without resentment, is an interesting part of the negotiation in traditional roles going on during this period. While marriage was by far the most acceptable choice open to women, returning home ran a close second. However, there were some problems with expecting a young girl to return to her life as it was before she went to college.

This readjustment to home life was given great consideration in the literature. As Charles Thwing, President of the College for Women, of Western Reserve University, stated in his book *Letters from a Father to His Daughter Entering College*, a graduate is to “put herself back into [family] relations. She is to be an obedient daughter, a helpful sister and a happiness bearing associate...She is to become interested in all the interests of the home...She is to assume responsibilities.”²⁷ Her initial hurdle in pursuit of this
goal was overcoming a tendency towards snobbishness in regard to family, friends and neighbors. Still, it was often more than snobbishness but also an underlying feeling of resentment and loneliness on the part of the daughter. That she spent four years of her life learning new things only to return to the status quo of her family where no one shared her experiences is at the heart of the conflict between the old and new. As one young lady explained,

They give you girls a Twentieth Century education and expect a Nineteenth Century product...Isn’t it a little unreasonable to give a girl several years of...college training, with all of their complex stimuli, with their definite preparation for aggressive independent work, and then expect her to settle down in her small home town, entirely content to be a secondary helping hand in a household, ‘to be the merry sunshine of a family’?29

Even as they understood this dilemma, authors still tended to focus their advice on how a graduate could reintegrate herself into home life. The consensus seemed to be that any dissatisfaction would be temporary once they discovered the true beauty and rewards of domestic life.30 As an Ohio State University student stated about a recent graduate’s return home,

Her home will not appear very different. Probably she has always felt vaguely dissatisfied about certain minor matters and now she has definite plans for remedying them.... When [she] comes back from college she wants her position to be just what it always was, general assistant to the entire family and special assistant to her mother, only now she feels able to fill in a manner more satisfactory to all concerned.31

A fictional story in LHJ exemplified this issue, although the outcome is a bit too tidy and predictably reinforced traditional roles. The basic plot was that Barbara graduated and returned home to her family where things were much the same as before she went away. However, now she was dissatisfied with her family and home in a new way. Also, the family expected her to be the same person she was before she went to
college. Time passed with her spending time in her room attempting to write; her aspiration was to be an author. However, gradually she needed to help more with household duties because her mother became ill. As she began to assist with domestic chores and taking care of her family, she saw how she could use the knowledge she gained in school to help and improve their lives. As she basked in her mother’s approval for a job well done Barbara realized that she was wrong to assume she was better than her family because of her education. The story ended with Barbara expressing feelings of confidence and satisfaction in her ability to assume her mother’s role and help her family; she did not mention her goal to be an author.32

The happiness to be found in the home was even more important when considered in conjunction with matrimony. The idea of colleges selling women short by teaching them only true academics and by making them “snobs” in regard to motherhood and domestic life was one the biggest concerns throughout the period. However, the more central issue was whether a college graduate was even equipped to run a household. This question was answered in two ways. One group said that graduating from college meant that a women was more capable of successfully managing a household, while others said that a college education provided no domestic knowledge. Since the detractors of a college education and its relevancy to homemaking were more vociferous, colleges felt the need to reinforce the acceptability of female college students with a compromise that accommodated traditional roles. The name of this compromise was Domestic Science, which first appeared in the early 1870s and 1880s at coeducational state universities, such as Cornell University, Iowa State University and other land grant institutions, as the Ladies Course or Home Economics.33
Domestic Science resolved, to an extent, the controversy over girls attending college in the first place. It allowed girls to enter the male sphere of college in a more acceptable manner by mitigating fears about the demise of marriage and family due to career-minded girls.

However, in the eyes of some, Domestic Science was not so much a compromise as a step backward to the time when women were confined to the domestic sphere. The all women's colleges, especially the Seven Sisters, shared this opinion and adhered to a more traditional academic curriculum. They felt that if a woman could successfully complete four years of academic instruction then she could surely learn to run a household with minimal difficulty even without specific instruction. Their stance was that a college education in no way discouraged young women from matrimony but rather bred a healthy respect for the institution of marriage and the family without benefit of a Domestic Science department. It did this by performing the true functions of higher education: teaching girls to think of others, broadening their outlook, training their minds and in general making them a well rounded individual able to rise to any occasion. This opinion was supported by Mary Woolley, president of Mount Holyoke College, who stated that

in the discussion of this question one very important fact is overlooked, namely, that many undergraduates are not able definitely to forecast their future, and that the aim of the college is to lay the foundation for a useful and effective life, wherever it may be placed, not to give a technical, vocational training.

There was also some anxiety that a domestic science department would once again marginalize women while seemingly allowing them the freedom of an education.

Others felt that domestic science was the answer to a serious flaw in the college curricula for girls. Edward Bok, not surprisingly, was very concerned that colleges did
not teach women practical skills in the profession that most of them would enter—homemaking. In a similar vein, an article in *Harper's Bazar* appealed to academia to teach girls useful and practical skills that would enable them to meet the everyday challenges facing the average women in her home. To be fair, the challenges addressed by the curricula suggested by *Harper’s Bazar* seemed to be less practical than those suggested by *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*. Most domestic science programs were very sophisticated in their approach to the home, not ordinary cooking and cleaning but rather nutrition and hygiene.

Many graduates even supported the introduction of Domestic Science. In an article based on a survey of hundreds of graduates, the one thing that most of them wished college taught was practical knowledge for dealing with everyday problems such as how to fix electrical wiring, make their own baking powder, or even understand more about babies and children. These students wanted an education geared towards their likely futures but an improved future, where housekeeping was lifted to the level of a science. The author of an article in *Good Housekeeping*, quoted a graduate as saying nothing was “more exacting, more inspiriting, and of more positive culture-value, than the work...in domestic science in the college from which...she received her...degree.” This should not come as such a surprise since by this point even men’s universities were getting away from classical studies and beginning to gear their curriculum towards professional and career training. It is also good to remember that this was the era of the Scientific Management and so learning systematic, efficient methods for running a household, was very a modern idea. During World War I, this very modernity led to the
classification of homemaking as a legitimate career, in the vein of business, engineering, and similar vocations. 43

This concept served to negate almost completely concerns about college girls and traditional roles. No longer was attending university a danger to separate spheres because society had resolved the dilemma by turning a university education into a training ground for the home, subsequently giving homemaking increased status. This does not mean that every young lady who attended college studied domestic science, but certainly many did. Some authors felt that girls who had studied for other degrees, besides teaching—which had always been acceptable—and domestic science, had not necessarily done very well for themselves, career-wise. 44 However, almost all authors seemed to discount any difficulties that women may have had obtaining jobs and success in male-dominated professions. Many felt that women were making some headway, especially in business, but even here women were placed in lower level positions and it was assumed that they would eventually leave to begin housekeeping. Careers such as stenography and library science, as hindsight shows, were actually devalued because women began to dominate these fields. Certainly, a lower pay level was justified because of assumptions about women's ultimate desire for marriage or the belief that they worked only for spending money rather than to support themselves and a family. This assumption brought the college girl full circle to join her ancestors whose place was assuredly in the home. Thus, as young ladies left home and the domestic sphere for the supposed freedom of academia and maybe a career, they found domestic training waiting for them. As a consequence, attending college was no longer quite the breach of traditional roles that it had been for
the first generation of girls. They were now a fixture of American society; a society that believed it had negotiated college into the woman’s sphere.

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2 Scanlon, 51-52.
5 Briggs, 77-115.
7 Briggs, 77-115.
14 “When a Girl is at College,” 32.
19 Bennett, 26.
21 Bennett, 18-45.
23 Bennett, 269-287.
31 “College and Home: The Young Graduate and Her Parents,” *Good Housekeeping* 40 (June 1905): 638.
33 Solomon, 85.
34 Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz’s book *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women’s Colleges from Their Nineteenth Century Beginnings to the 1930s* is an excellent source for information about the Seven Sisters colleges: Vassar, Bryn Mawr, Wellesley, Smith, Radcliffe, Barnard, and Mt. Holyoke.
35 Solomon, 85.
38 “The Aim of Women’s Colleges,” *Nation* 84 (February 14, 1907): 150-151.
42 “Wherein the College Should Help the Mother,” *Good Housekeeping* 34 (February 1902): 109.
CHAPTER 6. DRESS AND APPEARANCE

Interestingly enough, all of the concern over women assuming masculine roles and behaviors had another side. There was considerable interest in the young college student’s dress and appearance. Did she tend to dress in a masculine fashion? As she began playing sports, such as basketball, did her physique alter? Was she even interested in looking feminine? How much interest did she show in appearance related behaviors? The answers are actually surprising (or maybe not) when considered in conjunction with the many fears about women attending college and their consequent lack of interest in traditional roles. Traditional roles for women did include an intense interest in appearance and dress, especially within the realm of True Womanhood. The True Woman was expected to look and dress well to maintain her husband’s or father’s status. What if college affected her role as a status symbol as well as the role of wife and mother?

In order place college girls’ dress in the proper context an understanding of the changes that occurred in women’s dress and appearance from 1895 to 1920. In 1895, women wore full skirts that fell to the floor, tight fitting corsets that created an hourglass silhouette, blouses with huge sleeves and high necklines, and had long hair arranged in elaborate styles. By 1920, skirts were slim and fell somewhere between the ankle and mid-calf, the brassiere had joined the corset in creating a slimmer, almost boyish silhouette, blouses had lower necklines and smaller sleeves, and hair could be long or short but was overall simpler.

Certainly, the intervening years had seen many different styles, some absurd and others more practical but the shift to an easier, freer and simpler style by 1920 was quite a
change for a mere twenty-five years. Still, much of that change actually took place in the years before, during and after World War I. The 1910s were really a transition period in which the old, more encumbering clothing worn by women for generations began to fade away. This was when the boyish look often associated with the 1920s first appeared. While the transition had already started, wartime needs and shortages, especially in Europe but eventually in the United States, accelerated the changes. The fact that women engaged in more recreational and work related activities requiring freer movement also contributed to the changes.²

Society viewed college campuses as the instigator of many of these new activities so to begin to understand any change college attendance may have had on appearance related behaviors it is important to see the college girl as those outside her peer group saw her. She was usually considered different from her non-college counterpart, both in her dress and the amount of attention to which she paid to her appearance. There was a wide variety of viewpoints concerning the physical attractiveness and fashion sense of college girls. However, often both the college girls who paid too little attention and those who supposedly paid too much contributed to an overall negative stereotype of the college girl. This is in direct contrast to the positive stereotypes fostered by the drawings of artists such as Charles Dana Gibson and Harrison Fisher, who had a series of drawings entitled “College Girls” published in the Ladies Home Journal.³ These illustrations did, however, relate to a third opinion on the effects of four years of college on a young girl’s appearance. This group, which often included college graduates, felt that college girls were healthier and more robust than any other group of American women, while still retaining most of their feminine charm (Figure 1 and 2). The image of a healthy and
Figure 1. The college girl as Dr. Stanley Hall and certain scientists see her is “agimicagenic,” “biologically bankrupt,” a physical weakling. *Good Housekeeping* 40 (June 1905): 606.
Figure 2. As the rest of us see the college girl of to-day, she is setting the men a hot pace in athletics as well as intellectual progress. *Good Housekeeping* 40, (June 1905): 607.
physically fit college girl originated in the popularity of sport on campus, and in that sense it was not image but reality. The athletic type was in vogue on college campuses, within acceptable limits for their gender. They were improved women not only in terms of their education but also in their appearance.

Still, a seemingly small but outspoken group seemed to think that the college girl was generally unattractive in her dress and appearance. In fact, usually those who felt that the college girl’s appearance lacked charm connected this characteristic to a mannish attitude embodied by the college girl. They seemed to feel that many colleges encouraged a masculine demeanor in social interaction and lifestyle, resulting in the unfortunate side effect of a masculine appearance. In general, men seemed to be more apt to say outright that college girls were too masculine and terrible dressers while women offered explanations as to why men believed it. One unattractive attribute associated with the college girl concerned her physical presence and the overall impression she made through her mannerisms. In one person’s opinion, she did not “carry” herself well, but was “lumpish” and clumsy in her walk and posture.

A more widespread issue was the idea that college girls did not dress like women but rather some masculine-feminine hybrid. For the most part, the general public did not believe that she actually wore male attire but rather that she attempted to adjust traditional female clothing to downplay her femininity. Sometimes she was even accused of not knowing how hide her physical flaws with proper feminine attire. The idea that college girls were masculine in appearance may have been an overreaction in response to the shock of women doing something so much associated with the male sphere.
assumption may have been that since these women were acting in a more masculine fashion they were also inclined to dress in a less feminine fashion. College girls of the second and possibly third generation, as well as the public, believed that the first generation had in fact favored a more masculine appearance. However, the public still held fast to this perception of the college girl even into the 1900s. One young college girl asserted that the average man “immediately characterizes” the college girl “as one of those masculine women freaks” instead of what she strives to be—“natural” without many of the fashionable affectations of modern dress.

According to the author of “College Girls and Fashions,” the more rational “corsetless” dress favored by the earlier generation of college women did not make them any healthier than their modern “trimly corseted sisters.” However, it certainly made them less attractive by traditional standards of femininity. The author believed that girls went to college to improve themselves, so shouldn’t their appearance be part of that improvement. Of course, by improvement she meant within traditional feminine appearance norms. Anyone who attempted to act and dress in too masculine a fashion would have been shown the error of her ways. A short anecdote in a “larks” story from Ladies Home Journal describes an incident where a young girl was labeled a “freak” because her dress was very masculine. Her fellow students “cured” her by dressing up as young men and pretending they thought she was a man one evening as she walked home. They felt this would have the desired effect and thereafter she would “be more like a girl.”

However, while a few seemed to think the college girl was somehow not like other girls, who made an effort to be pretty and feminine, others thought the college girl
went to the other extreme. They felt that the young lady who attended college was too interested in her appearance to the detriment of her studies and her character. Often the culprit was identified as a freshman, one who had not yet adjusted to the fashion sense of the campus. New students were inclined to wear their silks and furs to classes as well as college functions rather than saving them for more appropriate occasions. Mabel Louise Shaw, a 1909 Oberlin College graduate, mentioned in one of her letters home, “that it is hardly safe for me to put on anything new anymore--for the girls think I have so many new clothes…”

Many advice books and articles warned young college freshman about putting too much emphasis on how they looked while ignoring their character. Simplicity was the key word almost every time college girls’ wardrobes were mentioned. College was supposed to be a democratic environment where any girl was accepted for who she was no matter how she looked or dressed. So, girls who spent too much time on their clothing and then judged others for not doing the same were considered undeserving of the privilege of attending college. It was not just wearing something inappropriate that caused concern but also the amount of money a college girl spent on her clothing.

Cost was an important consideration in assembling the college wardrobe. Many articles discussed the costs of various items on their lists. Ladies Home Journal offered practical advice for girls who could sew their own clothing, thus reducing the cost of attending college. Clothing costs were often related directly to whichever university a girl and her parents chose. Each school had a reputation built not only on academics but also on the interest their student body took in their appearance. Good Housekeeping seemed especially interested in how each school’s student body acquitted itself in the
fashion arena. They published two articles that discussed each individual school’s particular styles in conjunction with that school’s academic and extracurricular strengths. Co-educational schools tended to be seen as a single group, rather than identified by a specific institution. G. Stanley Hall wrote that, “girls’ colleges differ in the expense of dressing. [He was] told of one college where the nominal expense per annum runs from one hundred and ninety dollars to two hundred and fifty dollars but where few girls really escape with less than five hundred dollars.” So, in assessing where to send their daughters, parents had to consider not only tuition costs, but also whether they were able to provide a proper wardrobe for their chosen school.

The young ladies from Oberlin College, who left behind account books and letters, certainly did spend money and thought on their wardrobes every year. Many of the items that appear in their lists and letters are the very items listed in periodicals as staples of the college girl’s wardrobe. Olive Bell Daniels, a 1913 graduate of Oberlin College, kept an account book in which she recorded her expenditures including clothing and related items. According to the information she entered in her book she spent quite a bit each year on her appearance and this is assuming that she recorded everything. The most expensive year she recorded was her freshman year, 1909 to 1910, when she spent $377.18, which was quite a sum. This coincides nicely with what Dr. Hall had heard regarding the costs of clothing the college girl.

However, this total seems to be significantly more than several other budgets published about the same time. Even though the final total differed in each budget, they all recommended similar purchases. The authors of the other budgets allowed for many items to be made at home, thus reducing prices.
Montana State College during the 1914-15 school year, calculated that it would cost a total of $70.44, if all of the clothes were made at home.\textsuperscript{20} Another budget appeared in a thesis written by an undergraduate at Oregon Agricultural College; and based on that school, it concluded that $90.00 per annum was required.\textsuperscript{21} However, as one author wrote, “[c]onditions vary so much in different places and with different people,” the she was hesitant to quote a specific figure for a girl’s wardrobe, but if “cornered this question... I should say...from one hundred and fifty to two hundred dollars a collegiate year is a fair dress allowance for the average college girl.”\textsuperscript{22}

Mabel Louise Shaw was very particular about what her clothing and how she looked. The difference between her letters and the articles listing how many stockings and shirtwaists the college girl needed, is that Mabel was not necessarily motivated by practicality. She cared more about current styles and what the other girls wore. She wanted to fit into her environment and the proper clothing facilitated her acceptance by her peer group. She often wrote home about her classmates’ appearances as well as their comments about her clothing. In October 1908, she wrote, “A number of girls here have new silk dresses but none of them come (sic) up to mine.” Cost was also an issue for Mabel and apparently her family, because she always strove to acquire what she felt was necessary and still watch her expenditures. As she did not work, her family provided her clothing and so most items she purchased or thought about purchasing, she first discussed with her mother. According to one letter, she and her mother spent the summer sewing new things for the next year. She also frequently mentioned mending or altering existing garments to give them a new and updated look.\textsuperscript{23}
Magazine editors certainly believed that Mabel, with her abiding interest in her clothing and appearance as well as her desire to maintain her wardrobe in the best of taste, represented the average college girl, better than any of the more extreme stereotypes. Throughout the years of this study articles advising young girls what to take to college and what to wear while there increased steadily. The first articles found concerning a college freshman’s wardrobe appeared in *Ladies Home Journal* in 1901 and in *Good Housekeeping* in 1903. By 1910, such articles were fairly standard and appeared promptly in the late summer issues to allow time to get everything in order before departure.

Accordingly, the college wardrobe became almost as serious a matter as a wedding trousseau because the college girl needed to be presentable and wanted to make a favorable impression on new people. The earlier articles and fashion pages were briefer and more general in nature. They usually consisted of a page of illustrations accompanied by a brief description of each example. However, over the years these articles became more advisory in nature. The later articles, in addition to the fashion plates, consisted of lists of essentials for a college girl along with advice on material and color choice for each item. While always acknowledging current styles in their recommendations for party dresses and such, these articles tended to be more concerned with practicality even for the more frivolous garments. However, over time editors increasingly supplemented the articles with fashion illustrations with a greater emphasis on style and trends. Though as always, the concern that young girls would go to fashion extremes tempered the suggestions given in the magazines. 24
The first article of clothing that all magazines advised a young college girl about was her graduation dress. Graduation marked a new rite of passage for young girls in the United States. Not only did colleges commemorate graduation with the typical ceremony, but in the weeks beforehand the girls participated in many pre-commencement activities. Most of these activities were ritualistic in nature, and involved honoring their time at school while moving them towards a new role, that of graduate and ultimately an adult member of society. Many of the pre-commencement activities had prescribed dress codes, but it was the graduation dress, that held the most significance. It was as one author stated, one of the “most important pieces of finery her wardrobe has ever contained…” In all three magazines, a fashion page featuring graduation dresses appeared in 1895, the first year in this study, and then almost every year thereafter.

The graduation dress in many ways resembled a wedding dress, in recommended color and design. As far as I have been able to determine the graduation dresses described in the periodicals were almost always white throughout the period of this study and closely resembled many of the descriptions of wedding dresses. The main differences would be the veil and train seen on most wedding gowns in this period. Also, bouquets were very common accessories to graduation dresses. As early as 1896, The Delineator marked graduation as one of the six most important days in a woman’s life, along with her wedding day and the birth of her first child. The illustrations and descriptions of graduation dresses were always more involved than those of other garments for the college girl. Even though the graduation dress was the most common college related garment seen in the fashion pages its importance was more symbolic than practical.
Other garments clearly associated with the college girl tended to be of a more practical nature. For instance, college girls were pictured engaged in athletic activity almost as often as they were seen in graduation dresses. This was not a false representation as clothing for all manner of outdoor and sporting activities were included in a college girl’s wardrobe, such as shorter skirts and sweaters. A girl also needed the proper undergarments, which included stockings, corsets, petticoats, and nightdresses. A 1911 article even mentioned brassieres for more relaxed settings. Then, of course, they needed dresses for class, both for warm and cold weather. Authors recommended that these dresses be washable. They also required dresses suitable for dinner, church, parties and other social occasions. At least one serviceable suit was recommended as were any number of shirtwaists. They needed outdoor items such as a mackintosh or raincoat, winter coat, and rubbers. Various accessories were absolutely required, including gloves, hats, and shoes as well as simple furs. Last but not least, a kimono and other comfortable clothes for the dormitory were important items. The lists of essentials changed very little over the years and sometimes entire articles were recycled from year to year.

While 1910 marks the entrance of the yearly article on the collegiate wardrobe, advertisers only began consistently marketing to the college girl, either for clothing or any other consumer good, in 1914. The few advertisements, before 1914, that did feature college girls were selling food products, such as Karo corn syrup or household goods, such as Ivory soap. However in 1914, the first company addressed the clothing needs of college girls through an advertisement. Franklin Simon & Co. ran a full-page ad in the September issue of Harper’s Bazar, describing their new fall suits and dresses as suitable for the school and college girl. Thereafter, many other well-known companies began to
sell clothing to the college girl, including Bellas Hess & Co., a popular-priced catalog company and B. Altman and Co., an upscale store-based retailer. At the same time advertisements targeting college girls began to increase in the Iowa State University yearbook, *The Bomb*.

In some instances a company was created to meet the needs of the young consumer, specifically college girls, though they often also marketed their product to those who wanted to create a more youthful appearance. One such company, Betty Wales Dresses, appeared on the national advertising scene in 1916 (Figure 3). Betty Wales was the name of the heroine in a series of college stories, so it is likely the association would have been obvious to contemporaries. Still, even if someone was unfamiliar with the books, they had only to read the ad to learn this fact and more, for “Betty was born a genius, and such a knack for clothes! She was positively the envy of every girl in college. So it’s not surprising that she has gone into the business of making Betty Wales Dresses for college girls and youthful women.” Betty Wales’ advertisements frequently used this image of the fashionable, young college girl to expand their market. They often advised older women, i.e. mothers, that their frocks would make them look just like college daughters, youthful (Figure 4). Soon after Betty Wales’ debut another clothing company, Co-Ed Dressmakers, followed. Co-Ed Dressmakers’ advertising was more simplistic than Betty Wales but their logo of a young lady in a cap and gown made their target market clear (Figure 5). They also maintained that their dresses would make older women appear younger (Figure 6). By the 1920s, many companies considered college girls a significant target market. Companies also began to equate youthfulness with attractiveness using the image of the college girl.
Betty Wales in Business!

You remember Betty—the heroine of Margaret Warde’s series of college stories. Well, Betty always was the most fascinating surprise ever. But what do you think she is doing now?

For over a year she’s been conducting a real business not a hundred feet from the Waldorf-Astoria, Fifth Avenue, New York! And successful.

She told me confidentially that she sells exclusive shops and department stores in every state in this blessed country; even has orders from Alaska and Australia.

But no wonder. Betty was born a genius, and such a knack for clothes! She was positively the envy of every girl in college. So it’s not surprising that she has gone into the business of making Betty Wales Dresses for college girls and youthful women.

Her styles are simply stunning—just the despair of one trying to copy them. Betty is quality. Why, her School Dresses have been adopted by some awfully select schools and convents.

Yes, there are Betty Wales Afternoon Dresses and Social Frocks, too—you can buy them at quality stores anywhere—only Betty will be sure you see the Betty Wales label.

Betty Wales Will Give You a Plushkin

Betty Wales is so sure that a Plushkin is “lucky” that she will send one of these delightfully fluffy, fashionable, luckily things free to every girl mailing envelope. Betty says, “Lucky girls will always wear Betty Wales Dresses,” so giving away Plushkins is a good business. You see.

Send for your Plushkin before bedtime tonight.

THE BETTY WALES DRESSMAKERS, 103 Waldorf Bldg., New York

in association with Goldman Concert Co.

Always Look for the Label

Figure 3. Betty Wales Dressmakers Advertisement from July 1916, Harper’s Bazar
Figure 4. Co-Ed Dressmakers Advertisement from September 1918, *Harper’s Bazar.*
The Youthful Lines Of Betty Wales Dresses

The charm of simplicity combined with real smartness accounts for the immense popularity of Betty Wales Dresses among High School and College girls. But with older women, a more important quality enters in—the fact that Betty Wales Dresses give a youthfulness of line that frequently makes the wearer look five to ten years younger.

New Betty Wales styles are constantly appearing as delightful novelties for practically every occasion. See them at the new exclusive Betty Wales dealer near you. Do not miss the same dress under the name 20 in any place! Only Betty Wales dresses are guaranteed to have the symbol of good luck on the label of the dress you buy. Every Betty Wales Dress comes with a guarantee.

Betty Wales Dressmakers

Figure 5. Betty Wales Advertisement from August 1917, Ladies Home Journal.
Co-Ed Dresses

For Young Women and Women Who Want to Stay Young
Give you the satisfaction of being well dressed for all occasions.

The blue and white sash tied in the waistband represents both our guarantee and that of the exclusive CO-ED Dress in your city—complete satisfaction or your money back.

New style booklet showing the latest models for Spring and Summer sent free on request.

CO-ED DRESSMAKERS, 14 East 32nd Street, New York

PARIS: 16 Boulevard des Filles
CO-ED Dresses are produced by expert French milliners

Figure 6. Co-Ed Dressmakers Advertisement from March 1920, Good Housekeeping.
The fact that companies created entire fashion lines marketed to the college girl and then associated a fashionable and youthful appearance with that girl dispelled the masculine stereotype often associated with college girls. Suddenly, college girls were attractive and fashionable and had only the best of taste. The proliferation of advice specifically directed towards the college girl, also said that she was viewed, more and more, as a permanent part of society, one that could be admired. The clothing companies certainly thought other women would want to emulate her appearance when they wrote their advertisements. Books, such as those featuring the heroine Betty Wales, were common during these years providing another positive image of the college girl. All of the articles describing the clothing the college girl needed also covered what she kinds of parties she went to, how she dressed for dinner, and the athletic activities in which she participated among a host of other things. The college girl had become a highlight of American youth, attractive, accomplished, and a far cry from a freak who wanted to look like a man. So much had changed that it is hard to remember the roadblocks her predecessors faced before gaining admittance to a university, now Ladies Home Journal featured a college girl paper doll. Still, things were not perfect, the college girl may have overcome many prejudices regarding her appearance and behaviors, but the fears about women renouncing traditional roles remained alive in the persona of the New Woman.

1 Berg, 68-71.
3 "Harrison Fisher's College Girls" featured a picture every month from January to August 1908 in Ladies Home Journal.
5 Austin, 374.
6 Austin, 374.
There are many other examples in all three periodicals, although the Delineator's articles start later than the other two.


27 Maude White, “If a Girl is Going to College This Autumn,” Ladies Home Journal 28 (August 1911): 30.


35 Scanlon, 209.

CHAPTER 7: THE NEW WOMAN

The idea of the New Woman was introduced in 1894 in the *North American Review*. Like the college girl, she was associated with a more masculine appearance as well as with masculine behaviors. This was due in great part to her supposed desire to obtain things that belonged exclusively to men for many years, such as suffrage, higher education, and a career. So in that context college girls were New Women, on at least two counts. But how did public opinion of the college girl and the New Woman compare? What did they really think she was like, all caricatures and political cartoons aside? Were they as concerned about her as they were about college girls and their supposed lack of interest in traditional roles? Did they connect the college girl with the New Woman?

Many people associated the New Woman with some of the same unattractive characteristics of which college girls were accused. Authors complained that the New Woman, like the college girl, really wanted to be a man and that in order to achieve this she acted worse than a man. In these authors’ views, acting like a man meant that girls interacted and behaved with both sexes in a manner very similar to the way men interacted with one another. One particular article, which identified the Gibson Girl with the New Woman, gave this description “[she] is most sophisticated, highly educated in all that the schools teach, and elaborately informed about things in general and the habits of polite society. She deliberately chooses vulgarity as something ‘smart’ or as an expression of ‘individuality’ or ‘pose.’... knowing better she deliberately chooses the worse.”

This disapproving tone often coupled with a reference to higher education was common in the early articles referring to the New Woman. One 1896 article, concerned
that the New Woman had too many activities outside the home and subsequently lost all her inherent feminine characteristics included "higher education" in the list of excessive activities. An editorial the same year stated that if this "new" woman was a masculine woman then the world was better off without her. The author instead preferred a woman that "comes possessed of the precious instincts of motherly affection, of sisterly devotion, home-like emotion and tendencies..." or in other words the True Woman.

Others used the New Woman as a source of entertainment. *The Delineator* gave instructions in the August 1896 issue for "A New Woman's Entertainment" where the men were required to attempt many of the tasks, such as sewing on a button and making coffee, that hypothetically would be theirs because the New Woman was no longer concerned with the home.

Though likely the goal of this party game was a good laugh, it exemplified the concerns about the New Woman forsaking traditional feminine roles. Many articles dealt with this concern by assuring the world that the New Woman, rather than leaving the home, would become a new and improved True Woman. That she, like the college girl, because of her training and education, would make a better mother, wife and homemaker. In fact, most articles argued that New Women retained all of their feminine characteristics and instincts even if they did not necessarily channel them into the traditional role of homemaker. So, within this scenario, the New Woman architect, featured in *LHJ*, only built houses or rather "homes" because she unlike men was ultimately concerned with supporting the traditional family through her career choice.

World War I added a new element to the issue of the New Woman, when women began to fill, by necessity, traditional masculine jobs as well as expanded their foothold...
in traditionally feminine areas. The women who became munitions workers, government employees, and medical technicians were often identified as “New Women.” However, the articles written at the end of the war assured everyone that the New Woman would once again feel the lure of the home, marriage and motherhood as her true calling. This argument echoed many of the rationalizations about the college girl, who was also steadfast in her desire for a home and family in spite of her education. Needless to say, the college girl for the most part, accepted this long held belief about the supremacy of the feminine instinct for domestic sphere.

By the 1910s, the college girl had, in fact, convincingly argued that college did not discourage traditional roles but rather encouraged and improved them. However, this did not eliminate the threat of the New Woman, who was an abstract figure looking for a concrete being in order to take physical form. Beginning in the 1910s, that physical manifestation was the suffragette rather than the college girl. The New Woman was constantly associated with whatever current threat to the traditional status quo was most pressing. As one author said so succinctly in her title, “Whatever is New for Women is Wrong.” The article argues that anything women did that was unusual or different, throughout history, put society in a frenzy about the danger to “the Home, the Child, Marriage, [and] the Ever-Womanly.” From the tone of the articles about the New Woman and her manifestation as the college girl, I would say that the author’s analysis of the situation was very accurate. As soon as one threat was resolved, such as higher education for women, a new threat, like suffrage, waited to take its place. Eventually, the term, “New Woman” fell into disuse by the general population but there was always a new term, such as “flapper” to take its place, and an even “newer” woman to fear.
CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSIONS

During the years of this study, there were many fears about women attending college most of which universities and students together managed to disprove. As a consequence by 1920, it had become almost expected for middle-class girls to attend college if it was within their means to do so. This acceptance did not, however, come without a price. A college education for women had become less a vehicle for a career and more of an interim experience, albeit a pleasant and fulfilling one, before settling down to a home and family. Still, the new college education with its greater and greater emphasis on Domestic Science or a derivative thereof, supposedly produced a better grade of wife and mother. It was as if women took one step forward only to take two steps backward, although it was more like two steps forward and only one step backward, because they were, after all, attending college in increasing numbers.

As the college girl become more "domesticated" she also ceased to be associated with the image of the New Woman. In their negotiations with society’s negative stereotypes college girls actually became the alter ego of the True Woman that Cogan described, the "real" woman. Many of the arguments for an educated woman espoused by the proponents of the real woman were very similar to arguments for a college education in this period; education made one a better person, and as a result a better a wife and mother. The analogy does not however, work for all the aspects of the "real" woman. She, for instance, was cautioned about letting her intelligence show or at least show up men. However, while many believed that the college girl’s education made her a snob and sometimes arrogant, they did not usually suggest she pretend to be less than she was. Still, it was rather an interesting role reversal, where the college girl once so
closely associated with the New Woman became the "real" woman who was just a more liberal form of the True Woman.

One thing that symbolized a college girl's official acceptance by society was the positive portrayal of her appearance. Before 1895, most people viewed the college girl as a very masculine figure both in personality and in appearance. Over the years of this study, as the college girl accepted traditional gender roles and proved that she did not want to be a man, images of her appearance changed. The stereotype of her appearance became more traditionally feminine, but a more healthy example than in previous generations. The introduction of athletics also contributed to the new image of the college girl, as attractive and healthy. Initially many people were concerned that athletics would further the masculine tendencies they perceived in college girls. However, in the end most people praised the physical and appearance related effects of exercise on female students. I suspect that this positive view of athletics had much to do with the ever diminishing threat society believed college girls posed to traditional roles.

Certainly, Mabel Louise Shaw illustrated through her letters that a college girl's appearance was important personally and socially. College girls wanted to fit into their particular environment and be accepted within the larger culture; how they looked made that possible. The thesis of an article by Lynn D. Gordon was that the college girls' association with the Gibson Girl, a symbol of American beauty, indicated "social approval," which coincides with the progression I observed in the literature. Gordon also noted that higher education for women became ever more acceptable as students demonstrated that it did not necessarily lead to great social change. However, she does conclude that college educated women who never married were still harshly criticized for
neglecting their proper role. While I certainly agree with this, I think that, even more than her association with the Gibson Girl, the fact that manufacturers and clothing retailers began to target the college girl as a consumer really solidified her transition from liminal to a mainstream figure. The Gibson Girl ideal of the college girl faded away to be replaced by something new, possibly the flapper who was not such a positive model. However, the advertisers and magazines consistently increased the college girl's presence demonstrating not only her buying power but also her place as a role model for young ladies.

However, this does not mean that all college women fit into this new stereotype any more than they fit into the old stereotype. Some women still went to college with career goals. Others were very much activists for women's rights such as suffrage and birth control, causes still associated with the New Woman. Still, the many college students who responded to magazine surveys and editorials suggests that they were aware of and worked to counteract the negative press they received in magazines. More often than not students enforced the idea that they believed in traditional gender roles and appearance norms, in spite of the fact that they chose to attend college. Fewer articles appeared where college graduates encouraged careers and feminist reforms, still that may have had more to do with editors than with the actual opinions of students. Based on their frequent appearances on the pages of all three magazines it seems fairly safe to assume that college girls read periodicals on a regular basis. One student mentions that they regularly bought the Ladies Home Journal before going home to have a "spread." By reading magazines with advertisements, college girls contributed to their
transformation into an important consumer group, with the ability to demand goods that they wanted rather than passively buying whatever manufacturers offered.

In terms of future research, I wonder what new image society associated with the college girl of the 1920s, 1930s or even 1940s like? Did old stereotypes stand in her way when she wanted a career in traditional male fields? There were roadblocks created because many of the college women of 1895 to 1920 readily accepted the traditional role of homemaker. Their intentions were honest and their options limited but their choices must have had an effect on future generations of students. All of these issues are important to explore in order to obtain a broader picture of this generation of college women's impact. The college women from 1895 to 1920, seemed in retrospect to have given up many of the goals that the earlier generation of college women cherished. However, even with the accommodations to traditional roles this generation made they were the ones that gained some measure of acceptance for higher education for women.

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