



Gender Transformations: The Gilded Age and the Roaring Twenties

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Source: *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Recent Directions in Gender and Women's History (Mar., 2005), pp. 31-40

Published by: [Organization of American Historians](#)

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Gender Transformations: The Gilded Age and the Roaring Twenties

Historians now use the term “gender” to refer to the social meanings attached to perceived sexual difference. The lesson below introduces gender as a social construct by asking students to examine gender roles in two historical time periods. Looking at the ways in which manhood and womanhood, masculinity and femininity, were seen and practiced in differing eras serves to introduce students to the concept of gender and to show how examination of gender structures is a tool for analyzing the past. The problem of what may be called gender formation—that is, how manhood and womanhood are redefined over time while remaining a very basic binary division which organizes society—is new to most high school students. They can connect with it, nonetheless, because it leads to excellent discussion of present day expectations, such as the idea of thinness in women and muscularity in men.

During these lessons, students create a definition of gender and then use primary source documents to study transformations in gender roles in the Gilded Age and the Roaring Twenties. The lessons build on one another. The first calls for students to discuss gender attributes and ideas of masculinity and femininity and to examine these ideas in the context of the debate on women’s education. The second uses textbook sources and advertisements available online to explore

contested gender roles in the 1920s. The debate in that era takes a different tack since mass advertising, newspapers, and film showcased the efforts of the “New Woman” to free herself from the constraints of the past. Comparative questions are included to help students think about changes in gender roles over time and to help them connect these negotiations to the present.

The 1880s and the 1920s are used here but the lesson plan is adaptable for studying gender transformations in other areas of the U.S. history curriculum. See the bibliography for suggestions about Web sites to use when constructing a lesson for one of the other eras.

Mark Twain dubbed the late nineteenth century the Gilded Age for the prosperity that brought conspicuous displays of wealth while masking the problems that the consolidation of capitalism created. Most textbooks discuss politics, industrialization, modern cities, immigration, the labor of women and children, and the increase in leisure time. Often, there is a discussion of the rise of the “robber bar-

ons,” including John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, or J.P. Morgan as exemplars of the consolidation of resources at this time. This is a very rich period for a discussion of changing gender roles, however, as women moved into public spaces, modified their dress, began attending college, and challenged prevailing ideas of weakness by taking up bicycling, basketball, and



These two women are posed repairing their bicycles in Milton, ND, during the Gilded Age. At the time, some women “challenged prevailing ideas of weakness by taking up bicycling, basketball, and other leisure activities that required vigor and exertion.” (Image courtesy of Fred Hultstrand History in Pictures Collection, North Dakota State University Institute for Regional Studies, Fargo, ND.)

other leisure activities that required vigor and exertion. Traditional notions about the physical and mental capacities of women were challenged during the debate about their fitness for higher education. The first part of the lesson calls for students to discuss gender attributes and ideas of masculinity and femininity and to examine these ideas in the context of the debate on women's education.

The second part of this lesson, focusing on the 1920s, uses textbook sources and advertisements available online to illustrate the gender roles of the day, and to analyze how the ideas of the "New Woman" challenged prevailing gender norms. Most textbooks discuss the concept of the New Woman who had earned the right to vote and the freedom to work outside the home, to dress in form-fitting fashions, and to adopt manners such as smoking, drinking, and dancing. This discussion takes place alongside a look at the cultural life of the 1920s that mentions jazz, movies, literary movements, and prohibition. Both eras signal profound changes in society and this process of modernization includes transformations in gender roles.

By using primary source documents that describe and critique prevailing constructions of femininity and appropriate roles for women, the lesson shows how gender roles are prescribed and what impact they have on the relative status of women and men in society. Analysis of gender roles can help students see how women challenged and transformed their status at given points in U.S. history.

These two historical eras are particularly useful for illustrating gender role conflicts but there are a number of other topics teachers can use to show how gender is constructed and how various pressures modify existing gender roles. For example, discussions and debates about the physical and physiological capabilities and limitations of women illustrate gender constructs. Debates about good health and physical activity—whether bicycle riding in the 1890s, competitive swimming or tennis in the 1920s, or Title IX in the 1970s—demonstrate challenges to prevailing beliefs about gender.

Also, discussions and debates about higher education for women or the introduction of women into new areas of the work force spark students to reveal their assumptions about the "appropriate" roles of men and women in society. The 1920s saw women enter male dominated professions. World War I and World War II are also excellent places in the curriculum to discuss women's alteration of gender roles.

Finally, ideas about feminine beauty and fashion illustrate attitudes towards the construction of womanhood. Analyzing advertisements and discussing how they shape or reflect gender roles is a good way to make history entertaining and interesting to students. For example, contrasting the simple outfit of the Gibson girl of the 1890s with the

flapper costume of the 1920s prompts lively debate. Important connections to current media influences in advertising and music help students see that "proven" physiological differences between men and women or ideas of beauty, such as the idea of thinness in women and muscularity in men, are constructions of a given time period. Debates about gender role conflicts in our own era help student reflect on their own beliefs and assumptions.



Analyzing advertisements, such as this beauty shop ad from the 1920s, will help students realize that "ideas about feminine beauty and fashion illustrate attitudes towards the construction of womanhood." (Image courtesy of the Advertising Ephemera Collection, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, A0048.)

National Standards

These lesson plans will help students master the following standards from the National Standards for United States History:

Era 6—The Development of the Industrial United States (1870-1900),

Standard 2—Massive immigration after 1870 and how new social patterns, conflicts, and ideas of national unity developed amid growing cultural diversity.

Standard 2C—The student understands how new cultural movements at different social levels affected American life. The student is able to explain Victorianism and its impact on architecture, literature, manners, and morals.

Era 7—The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)

Standard 3—How the United States Changed from the end of World War I to the eve of the Great Depression.

Standard 3A—The student understands social tensions and their consequences in the postwar era. The student is able to analyze how the emergence of the "New Woman" challenged Victorian values.

Time

Lesson One requires two or three class periods and two homework assignments. Lesson Two requires one or two class periods and one homework assignment.

Objectives

- To discuss definitions of masculinity and femininity and how they change from one historical era to another.
- To understand gender as a social construction which changes in different historical time periods.
- To learn to find, select, analyze and discuss primary source documents.
- To answer the question "How are understandings of manhood and womanhood changing in the 1890s? the 1920s?"

Procedures

■ Lesson Plan One : Gender Transformations in the 1890s

Class Period One—What is gender? "Gender is a set of cultural roles" (1).

Ask students to divide a piece of paper into two columns with the word "man" at the top of one column and the word "woman" at the

top of the other column. Ask them to brainstorm, writing down all of the characteristics of man and all of the characteristics of woman. Encourage them to include biological characteristics (reproductive organs, hormones), physical characteristics (strength, agility, stamina), emotional attitudes (toughness, sensitivity), psychological similarities or differences (emotive or reserved emotionally), intellectual capabilities (analytical or literary), aptitudes, competencies, etc. Encourage students to freely include stereotypical or historically held ideas of the attributes of men and women.

Now ask students to share their ideas and record the results on the board. Try to group the responses (physical, emotional, intellectual, etc.) and list contrasting attributes side by side (strong versus weak, for example).

After creating the list, discuss how students know these things to be true. In an era of transsexuality and gender change, question their understanding of the anatomical, emotional, physical, psychological, or intellectual differences or natural aptitudes of men or women. If commonly held assumptions are not provable, ask students to explain or hypothesize where the attitudes come from. For example, why do people believe that women are more emotional than men? Ask students to draw conclusions about differences between men and women and look for contradictions among the attributes that students ascribe to men and women. Ask students to think about the difference between sex and gender. What can they prove? After all is debated, what differences remain on the lists?

Finally, arrive at a working definition of the concept of gender as a social construction varying at different historical times, or of the social use of a binary division between men and women. Point out how gender roles have changed, noting that they are not fixed (Victorian ideas of women's roles versus today's views of womanhood, for example). Introduce the concept that what makes men "men" and what makes women "women" changes over time.

Caution: Be sure to allow all responses equal time and let humor have its place!

For homework, students will look at documents and quotations that discuss the debate over women's health and higher education in the 1890s. Distribute document sets (included at the end of this article, pages xx-xx) and ask students to complete worksheets for homework. Given the talents of your classes, teachers might ask Advanced Placement students to read all of the documents and answer all questions. For other sections, teachers might split the documents up assigning one or two documents to each student and ask groups of students to share their findings and report together.

Class Period Two

Ask students to present their documents to the class through a summary of the analysis questions. Divide the class into two groups, those whose documents supported the education of women and those whose documents did not support education. Encourage discussion of the arguments made on each side of the question.

For homework, students will write short response papers to the question: *How does the debate about women's education and health illustrate challenges to gender roles in the 1890s?*

■ Lesson Plan 2: Gender Transformations in the 1920s

In advance of the class, assign a reading from the textbook on the 1920s with an emphasis on the "New Woman." The text selection should discuss the radical changes in women's roles adopted at this

time. Students need to understand that by that time, women were now participating in politics, social issues, and the working world and at the same time revolutionizing manners. Be sure to discuss the associated rise of consumerism, emphasis on beauty, and the reach of mass advertising prior to working with the advertisements.

During class students should go to the computer lab or alternatively access home computers and log on to the Web site Ad*Access found at <<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/adaccess/>> or the American Memory page at the Library of Congress, <<http://memory.loc.gov/amem/award98/ncdhtml/eaahome.html>>, Emergence of Advertising in America, 1850-1920: Selections from the Collections of Duke University. These sites contain advertisements, including those on Health and Beauty from the 1920s. Alternatively, the teacher could prepare a document set and allow students to add the products of their own research to the set.

Instruct students to choose one advertisement and use it to answer the following analytical questions, which you can create as a Worksheet for the class:

- *What images are used to sell the product?*
- *What techniques does the advertiser use to make it appealing? (sex appeal, endorsement of upper classes, etc.)*
- *What gender roles do these images reinforce or defy?*
- *What is the explicit message of the advertisement?*
- *Are there any implicit messages?*
- *Who does this ad address? What socio-economic class would find it appealing?*
- *What is the 1920s idea of a beautiful woman? Does it differ from the 1890s?*
- *How does it compare to our own ideas of beauty for women and men?*

Ask students to print a copy of their ads to share with the class and have them present their responses to the Worksheet questions while the other students view the advertisement.

Assemble a document set and discuss what the advertisements reveal about images of beauty and the new woman of the 1920s. Compare the pursuits of women of the 1920s with the gender role descriptions of the 1890s. What contrasts do you find? What conclusions can you draw about post-World War I challenges to previously accepted gender roles? On what basis do women argue for more equality, freedom, and independence? Is this the same argument that was used to advocate for equality in education?

Other possible assignments could be:

- Creating a PowerPoint presentation discussing challenges by women of the 1920s to prevailing gender roles and including slides of various advertisements.
- Presenting a poster board and oral report discussing images which convey ideas about the New Woman.
- Writing a comparative essay analyzing changes to gender roles in the 1890s and the 1920s.

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Endnotes

1. Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past—Placing Women in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 238.
2. Edward H. Clarke, *Sex in Education; or a Fair Chance for Girls*, 5th ed. (Boston: Osgood, 1874), 12.
3. Joan Jacobs Brumberg, "Chlorotic Girls, 1870-1920: A Historical Perspective on Female Adolescence," *Child Development* 53 (1982): 1471.

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Web Based Resources

- "Emergence of Advertising in America: 1850-1920" and Ad*Access, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, <<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/>>
- "American Memory Collections", Library of Congress, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/>>
- "Making of America" Collections, Cornell University Library, <<http://moa.cit.cornell.edu/moa>>
- "The Nineteenth Century in Print: Periodicals", American Memory Collections, Library of Congress, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpcop/moahtml/snchome.html>>
- "Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1775-2000", <<http://womhist.binghamton.edu>>

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Document Set—Women’s Health and Education in the Late Nineteenth Century (Please refer to the documents/handouts on pages 36-40).

Document Analysis Worksheets: Gender Transformations in the 1890s.

Introduction: “Sex in Education”

1. What theory does Clarke use to justify his cautions about education for women?
2. What is his greatest concern for women who pursue rigorous education?

Document #1 “The Education of Women”

1. What does this author believe to be the purpose of education?
2. What are the most important roles women will play in the future of America?
3. What kind of training does he advocate for girls?
4. For what does this prepare them?
5. What does he think of “unnecessary scholastic training?”
6. What are the qualities of “good womanly women?”
7. What does the phrase “the woman is of greater worth to the world than the scholar” imply?

Document #2 “The Two Paths: What will the girl become?”

1. How does a girl start down the wrong path?
2. What qualities does the girls on the left path embody? What does she become?
3. What qualities does the girl on the right path possess? What does she become?
4. Which path looks more interesting to you?
5. What gender roles are most respected in this drawing?

Document #3 “Ill Health Among Women”

1. Who wrote the paper discussing ill health in women?
2. What does she cite as the causes of ill health?
3. What is thought of as beautiful at this time? What does she feel sickness should be allied with? Is illness a moral failing?
4. What topics does she mention that you find surprising?
5. What can you conclude about the gender roles of women from this article?

Document # 4 “Women at an English University: Notes on the Health of Women Students”

1. At the top of the page, Eleanor Field argues that educated women can enter public duties, but what other choices exist?
2. What does she believe about education for women and its impact on health?
3. What did the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor conclude about the health of American female college graduates?
4. What do the statistics from the English Universities show?
5. What about the rate of marriage and the number of children born to these women?
6. What is the author’s conclusion?
7. What are the concerns of the author of this article and of society in general?

Document #5 “The Greatest Need of College Girls”

1. What does the author believe is the greatest need of college girls?
2. What do men’s colleges have that women’s colleges do not have?
3. What does she mean by “active repose?”
4. What does she believe is the purpose of women’s education?
5. Why should women try to have “normal nervous systems?”
6. Summarize her argument beginning with the sentence: Women’s schools and colleges should train women to . . .

Summary Questions:

1. What do these documents reveal about contested gender roles in the late nineteenth century?
2. What role do educated women threaten?
3. What fears do the authors express about educated women?
4. What challenge do “college girls” present to previously accepted gender roles?
5. How are gender roles changing at this time?

Background for Document #1

Dr. Edward Clarke, a highly regarded professor at Harvard Medical School, wrote forcefully for the ideology of “ovarian determinism” in his influential book *Sex in Education, or, a Fair Chance for Girls*, published in 1874. He argued that women are incapable of difficult studies because of their physiology. Believing that mental strain sapped women’s physical resources, Clarke based his argument on the theory of “conservation of energy” which proposed that the brain withdrew nourishment from the rest of the body during intellectual activities. If the brain was overworked, often the body suffered and the individual’s health decayed, frequently deteriorating into the peculiarly feminine conditions of hysteria and neuralgia. Men could also fall victim to this malady. But when men and women presented similar symptoms, doctors most often attributed men’s problems to overwork or mental labor while connecting women’s problems to genital or reproductive disturbances. Clarke’s influential theories socialized adolescent girls about their bodies, convincing them that they needed to conserve the fixed amount of energy they possessed by not exerting themselves intellectually (2).

This withdrawal of “vital energy” was seen as dangerous to women, particularly at puberty, when the reproductive system was developing. Neglect of rest and excessive mental strain could permanently damage the reproductive system. The brain would draw too much blood from the reproductive organs or the organs would be damaged indirectly through the evil effect of tension brought on by overly rigorous work. Girls, in the transition period from childhood to adulthood, were looked upon as “at risk” for disease. Puberty supposedly created a psychological and a physiological crisis in girls until menstruation was firmly established. Special care was taken to monitor the demands placed upon the adolescent, including close supervision by watchful mothers of diet, clothing, exercise, and mental and moral training. In the view of many, “female adolescence was especially dangerous because menstruation raised the specter of multiple crises of a social as well as a medical nature. Only marriage ensured a formal, guaranteed and effective resolution of the difficult transition period” (3). □

Scarcely any subject has occupied a larger place in the attention of the public during the last twenty years than the education of women, and yet there is nothing like a definite general agreement concerning any point involved in the discussion. We have clamorous cries for the identical education of women and men, for co-education, and for the higher education of women, whatever that may mean; we have discussions of the comparative intellectual capacities of men and women, and of the physical fitness or unfitness of girls for university work; now and then we have graphic pen-pictures of the domestic misery produced by the education of girls out of the intellectual plane occupied by their fathers and mothers, and tirades, innumerable as vague against the frivolity of the education given to girls in fashionable schools. But with all this discussion the public is still divided in opinion upon that question of supreme importance, What training and what teaching ought we to give to the girls who are to be the wives of our boys, and who are to bring up the next generation of Americans?

The principle is that which has been enunciated above, and it is fundamental as we have said, to all profitable discussion of education. The purpose of the present paper is to inquire whither its application to the question of women's education leads. By this test, what teaching, what knowledge, what skill, and what intellectual and physical discipline do our daughters need? This is a question of the highest moment.

Upon the answer which this generation gives to it will depend the happiness and the welfare of generations to come. No man or woman who has daughters to bring to womanhood or sons to be mated with the young women of the future can afford to treat the theme lightly or in a spirit of perversity.

Before we can decide what education our daughters need we must know what their lives are likely to be, and what demands life is likely to make upon them. Luckily we know in the main, and the contingencies are such that we may provide against them. So large a proportion of our girls will become wives and mothers that our only safety lies in giving all of them proper preparation for the life of wives and mothers.

For such a life they will need, first of all, good physical health. So certain and so imperative is this need, and so surely must neglect of it result in wretchedness, that inattention to this matter may fairly be called criminal. Yet in no other particular, perhaps, is the education of girls more generally neglected or more frequently misdirected. There is not only too little systematic effort made to educate girls' bodies into supple robustness, and to give stamina and buoyancy to their constitutions, but there is, too commonly, positive education in ill health given to them. Very much that is most carefully done for girls is directly productive of ill health, weakness, and want of stamina. The care given to the complexion, for example, by which too many mothers mean only the whiteness of the skin, commonly consists of restraints which break down the nervous system, impair vitality, and invite invalidism. This is not a lecture on hygiene, and it is no part of our purpose to suggest the proper hygienic governance of girls' lives. We seek only to emphasize the importance of proper physical training as a necessary part of the education of girls.

As wives and mothers our girls are to be, in Addison's phrase, "the cement of society." Without their purity and grace, and intelligence and good temper, society would crumble to pieces. It will be their task to keep the world sweet and wholesome; to create, regulate, and maintain social intercourse of a graceful, profitable kind; to make life worth living. It will be theirs to make homes with the material means which men furnish; to turn mere dwelling-houses into centres of attractive

domestic life. Upon them chiefly will fall the duty of ornamenting life, cultivating the world's taste, keeping its moral nature alive, and inspiring the men of their generation with high and worthy conceptions of purity and duty. It will be theirs to entertain the world, too, and to amuse it in profitable ways; to minister in all womanliness to its moral, physical, and intellectual health and comfort. Women only can create that sweet and wholesome atmosphere in which domestic life springs into existence and grows. Above all and beyond all in importance, these girls whom we are educating must bear and rear the next generation of men and women, and upon their fitness to discharge this task well the character of the future men and women of America depends.

Our civilization is founded absolutely and wholly upon the family, and the wife and mother determines the character and life of the family. It is not worth our while, therefore—nay, is it not our highest and most imperative duty—to take care that our girls, upon whose shoulders such tasks as these are presently to fall, shall be fitted by every means in our power for the due and happy discharge of functions so important? Is it not criminal folly for us to treat their education as nothing more than a preparation for the frivolous life of the ball-room? And is it any whit wiser for us to push them into wearing competition with men in university work to the neglect of aught that belongs by right of life's need to their own proper education?

As a preparation for such duties as we have outlined above, girls need both moral and intellectual culture of a kind which neither any fashionable girls' school nor any university in the land provides or can provide. They need, above all, the training of home life and home influences—this far more than scholastic discipline, far more than what we term accomplishments.

In our scheme of education for girls, therefore, we would make everything subordinate to the one purpose of fitting them to lead the lives of women contentedly in happiness and usefulness and all grace; we would seek first of all to make women of them, women capable of doing the duties of a woman's life becomingly and well, and of enjoying that life. To that end we would make it a first care to give them good health and strong constitutions; secondly, to train them thoroughly in all domestic arts; thirdly, to cultivate the aesthetic side of their natures, in order that they may know how to minister to beauty; fourthly, to train them to right ethical principles and impulses, and cultivate in them a genuine love of home and its duties; finally, we would cultivate in every girl such sympathies and tastes as are necessary to the healthful occupation of her mind and the development of her conversational powers; that is to say, we would lead her to a love of letters, of music and art, and to a reasonable interest in the affairs of mankind.

Such, we think, is, in outline and substance, the education which common-sense must prompt us to give to our girls by way of preparation for that matronly life which each of them will most probably lead. If to this preparation for life any girl chooses and is able to add scholastic attainments, there can be no objection; but these are the educational necessities of life, while scholastic attainments are life's refinements. To neglect necessary preparation for happy and useful life in order to acquire unnecessary scholastic training is simply folly of a suicidal sort. As a matter of fact the great majority of women, for lack of time, or means, or inclination, can not become scholars in the university sense, in any case, and to set up such a standard as a common one for girls to strive to attain, seems little less than a waste of the world's precious commodity—good womanly women. The woman is of greater worth to the world than the scholar.

THE TWO PATHS



WHAT WILL THE GIRL BECOME?



AT 13
BAD LITERATURE



AT 20
FLIRTING AND COQUETTERY



AT 26
FAST LIFE-DISSIPATION



AT 40
AN OUTCAST
Copyright, 1903, by J. A. Hertel.

THE above cut represents a beautiful little girl at seven—as pure as a sunbeam—she comes from a fine Christian family. Going to the left you see her at thirteen reading “Sapho,” a vile novel that was suppressed several years ago in New York—it had a bad effect on our model little girl; at nineteen *Flirting and Coquetry*; third stage, a step lower; at twenty-six, *Fast Life and Dissipation*—this tells the sad story; at forty she is *an outcast*—the miserable result of *Social Impurity*.

To the right we have a brighter picture—at thirteen, *Study and Obedience*; next a young lady in church—*Virtue and Devotion*; at twenty-six—*A Loving Mother*—a most inspiring and lovely scene; at sixty—*An Honored Grandmother*.



AT 13
STUDY AND OBEDIENCE



AT 20
VIRTUE AND DEVOTION



AT 26
A LOVING MOTHER



AT 60
AN HONORED GRANDMOTHER

"Ill-Health Among Women"

The Sanitary Engineer has the following references to an excellent paper by Miss Anita E. Tyng, M.D., of Providence, on "the Causes of Ill-Health among Women," contributed to the annual report of the Rhode Island State Board of Health, which deserves republication as a sanitary tract. She places ignorance as among the chief of these evil causes, and suggests that one remedy lies in the dissemination of proper knowledge by sanitary authorities. Instruction is needed in the duties of motherhood and in scientific cooking, especially the preparing of proper nourishment for the sick. She thinks there is room for the better organization of household labor, and that if we had women architects much improvement might follow in the arrangement of houses. If the masses were properly taught to abandon their "half-starving diet" of bread and tea, and excessive use of patent tonic medicines, much good would result. She quotes authorities to prove that as a rule people are under-fed, and that the use of stimulants and the consequent physical and moral degradation, can and should be prevented. It is easy, she remarks, to be a good Christian if one has a sound spine and a sound stomach; so it is easy, if one has a sound stomach well supplied, to resist the temptations of liquor and to refrain from crime. It is said that insanity is on the increase, especially among the ignorant classes and that only ten per cent are cured, yet Dr. Tyng cites numerous authorities to show that mental disease may be greatly diminished by a more rigid observance of the laws of health and nature. The delicate subjects of abortion and the social evil are discussed by Dr. Tyng in a practical manner, and her suggestions are pertinent. Popular enlightenment, she thinks, will lessen both these evils. A change of tone in public opinion is needed. Delicacy must not be confounded with refinement, nor thinness and paleness for beauty. Sickness should be considered as allied with sin. Finally, women must be taught to help themselves in these matters. We trust these wise suggestions will find many readers.

"Note on the Health of Women Students"

The Sixteenth Report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor contained some interesting data, furnished by the Association of Collegiate Alumnae, in regard to the health of American female college graduates. Mr. Carroll D. Wright, the Superintendent of the Bureau, summed up the statistics in these conservative words: "It is sufficient to say that the female graduates of our colleges and universities do not seem to show as the result of their college studies and duties any marked difference in general health from the average health likely to be reported by an equal number of women engaged in other kinds of work." At that time the only data relating to the health of a distinct class of women, that were a report on the working women of Boston. Five years have passed since this report appeared, and we are not presented with some English statistics on the same subject, which in some respects are more valuable than the American report which suggested them.

ALL HONOR STUDENTS. TOTAL NUMBER 269.

	Excellent or good, per cent.	Fair, per cent.	Poor, bad, or dead, per cent.
From 3 to 8 years of age	71.28	16.86	11.80
From 8 to 14 " "	69.78	20.15	10.07
From 14 to 18 " "	66.54	23.79	9.67
At time of entering college	74.35	17.47	8.18
During college life	67.66	22.68	9.66
Present health	74.72	18.96	6.32

SISTERS OF ALL HONOR AND OTHER THREE YEAR STUDENTS. TOTAL NUMBER 264

From 3 to 8 years of age	65.87	12.70	21.43
From 8 to 14 " "	65.12	18.60	16.28
From 14 to 18 " "	56.44	29.17	14.39
From 18 to 21 " "	60.61	24.62	14.77
Present health	74.72	18.96	6.32

It appears from this table that throughout life the students in the aggregate maintain a higher standard of health than their sisters. Of this fact, two possible explanations are suggested, that a higher average of physical vigor is implied in the desire to go to college, and that the healthier members of a family are, on the average, expected to obtain remunerative work, and accordingly to prepare themselves for it. But how are we to account for the temporary depression of average health at college? For although the health of students is better than that of their non-college sisters, it shows a deterioration from their own standard, both before and after the period of college life. There seems little doubt that a large part of this loss must be ascribed to the effect of "worry over personal and family affairs." A similar connection between health and worry was indicated in the American Statistics.

No part of the report is more interesting than that portion dealing with the occupations of both the students and their sisters. It does not seem unreasonable to assert that a very positive relation exists between congenial intellectual occupation and good health, and that there is an equally direct although subtle one between desultory and untrained (even when ardent) efforts and much of the indifferent health of women of the upper and middle classes. The tables prove that 77 per cent. of all the students and 83 per cent. of the honor students have engaged in educational work since leaving college, while less than one-half the proportional number of their sisters have done so, and "for a much larger number of sisters than of students no regular occupation at all is reported."

The difference in the rate of marriage of students and their sisters is unimportant, if we take the end of the college life of the former as the starting-point for the comparison, as a certain number of the sisters marry while the students are at college. Taking the students and the sisters together, as a fairly representative group of women from the English professional classes, we must face the serious conclusion that a large proportion of these women do not marry at all. We find, however, that there are fewer childless marriages among the students than among the sisters, that there is a slightly larger proportion of still-born children among both than among the average population, but "on the other hand, that the proportion of deaths among the children born alive is smaller than ordinary, especially in the case of the children of students." Of the married students nearly 78 per cent. enjoy excellent good health, whereas but 62 per cent. of their married sisters are equally fortunate, and the students' children are healthier than those of the sisters. Although such a statement may seem superfluous in this age of physical culture, the report reveals the fact that among the women of both divisions, those who during their school life enjoyed much out-of-door exercise and amusements showed the benefit of such robust physical preparation for the stress and strain of mature life, by a better standard of health.

Of course broad and certain conclusions cannot be drawn from tentative and numerically small statistics. Nevertheless, such are the facts so far collated. That any serious alarm as to the effect of University education on the health of women is groundless, is clearly shown by the fact that the net amount of increase in good present health, as compared with health between fourteen and eighteen years of age, is greater in the health of students of their sisters.

A final word of comparison between the English and American statistics:

The average health of the American college student seems to be higher than that of her English compeer (probably accounted for by certain college physical conditions), but the American student who has "studied severely" does not appear to recover as high a tone after leaving college as the English woman. The proportion of Americans who report bad health on entering college is 25 per cent., of English women only 8 per cent. Such figures throw a side-light on the ordinary hygienic condition of American well-to-do homes. While a larger proportion of American college graduates marry, a larger proportion are childless. A smaller proportion of them are engaged in educational work—in other words, more American college-bred women are absorbed in the home and philanthropic work of the nation, and so act as an invaluable leaven.

"The Greatest Need of College Girls"

It does not require acute perception to find the greatest physical need among women in our schools and colleges. A collective need is most often an exaggeration of the average individual shortcoming. No one who has been an intimate of a large college of women will deny the general state of rush and hurry which prevails there. "No time" is the cry from morning until night. Worry and hurry mark the average condition of the schoolgirl. If she is not hurried or worried herself, through the happy possession of a phlegmatic temperament, she cannot entirely resist the pressure about her. The spirit of the place is too strong for an individual to be in it and not of it. The strain is evident in the faces of students and teachers. It is evident in the number who annually break down from overstudy. More pitifully evident is it in those who have not wholly broken down, but are near enough the verge of disaster to have forgotten what a normal state of mind and body is. We can only think, in the presence of such an one, what a magnificent specimen of womanhood that might have been, with a constitution that holds it own through such a daily strain, and does not give in completely. This greatest physical need among studious women is so evident that those who will can see it. Those who will not see it are living in so abnormal a state themselves that they do not recognize the want because of their own necessity. Men and women can breathe bad air and not know it, but one coming directly from out-of-doors will be sickened at once.

To see the strain at its height, it must be watched during examinations. The average schoolgirl—or schoolwoman—would not feel that she had taken her examination properly unless she had taken it in a condition of worry, hurry, fright, and general excitement. Mark the contrast in this respect between colleges for men and those for women. Students in the former are not without their share of nervous strain, especially in examinations, but the strain is noticeably far less than among the women. The explanation of the difference is commonly found to lie in the physical exercise. The greatest strength of a college will come when this active repose or restful activity can be so taken as a matter of course that it need never be thought of at all. Under these conditions men and women would be sensitive to the slightest disobedience of such natural laws and correct it at once, as they are now sensitive to more flagrant disobedience of other laws. Then would come a freedom of mind and body such as we see now only in the most healthy little children.

A woman's education should prepare her to hold to the best of her ability whatever position life may offer. A training to help her to a wholesome use of a normal nervous system must be the foundation upon which she stands if she would perform in the best way the work which lies before her. No womanly woman wants to be a very good man, but a very true woman, and as such she not only holds her own place firmly, but helps man to hold his. A man's life in the world is in this age full of temptation to nervous strain and worry. If he takes the overwrought state home only to find a similar state in his wife, increased by just so much as the natural intensity of the feminine nervous system exceeds that of the masculine, he does not go home to rest, but to more nervous strain; and the wearing effect upon one of the excited and tired nervous system of another who is nearly related is more fatiguing in a few hours than would be as many days of severe work.

In contrast to this place of the ideal of repose that may be found in a woman and the influence it may have upon a man, not only because of the restful atmosphere to which he returns, but the certainty throughout the day that there is the quiet strength at home, and that he will surely find it.

Because the nerves of the average woman are far more excitable than those of the average man, we could not only reach the man by means of the woman, but by training the mothers reach more surely the next generation, so that later this natural economy of our nervous force may come, in school and out as a matter of course. And where could we better begin the training than in our school and colleges for women?

—Annie Payson Call