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ABSTRACT

The expansion of higher education in the 19th century United States to include women both restricted and increased their freedom. Because the industrial revolution and the movement westward limited the availability of men, the "moral guardian" role society prescribed for women was logically extended to teaching. The reason, however, for the inclusion of women in education was based on economy (women teachers were paid less than men) and the shortage of male teachers. Thus, public arguments for women's education were quite different from private considerations. The economic needs that dictated that women would be the principal members of the teaching profession were obscured by pronouncements of women's superior moral and nurturing powers. For the women who realized that lack of education was a barrier to independence and respectability, their involvement in teaching was an important way to justify their own education. With literacy, women gained leverage and began to press for equal social, political, and economic opportunities. (KC)

# SOCIAL CONTROL AND THE EDUCATION OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN WOMEN

by

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# SOCIAL CONTROL AND THE EDUCATION OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN WOMEN

## Introduction

The wilderness environment in which an United States was conceived also gave birth to an unprecedented respect for the labor of women. Social necessity caused colonial women to follow their husbands to the new, unsettled areas of America, but their contributions to the stability of these settlements created a need for their presence. The thesis proposed is that the limits on choice for women, here defined as social control, tied them, from the earliest moments of American history, because of their abilities, to the narrow, societally defined limits placed on those abilities. Whether this control is to be labelled as suppression, subjugation, discrimination, subordination, or oppression (see For Consideration, p. 34) will be the major conclusion of this research.

The first limit placed on women's abilities was to "tie their fate" to that of the family.[1] The colonial period was a time during which women were helpmates and had no tenable existence outside the home. One means by which this seclusion from the public sphere of life was achieved was through the general exclusion of women from schools.

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[1]Berenice A. Carroll, Liberating Women's History (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p. 279.

Schooling for women was often ridiculed in colonial America. The form it initially took, therefore, and which was accepted because of the lack of academic emphasis, followed an English idea which was essentially a prototype day care center. Women with adequate means could afford the small fees charged to enroll their girls in "Dame schools." These schools offered a little education beyond the traditional "Mother's Knee" curriculum of the home, but their academic function was really secondary to their primary function, as small businesses supporting impoverished women.[2] Dame schools became precedents for many other women to follow, and numerous schools were opened by these women in the late 1700s and the first half of the nineteenth century.

After the Revolution, the atmosphere in the U.S. became more receptive toward the idea of women's education and, particularly in the New England states, more lenient.[3] It will be shown how more and more girls gradually gained access to educational opportunities, but there was a problem associated with education for women: if men were being educated for a profession, for what purpose were women to be educated? The rationale behind education for women was unclear because of the association of education with an occupation.

Most occupations were closed to women. It was said in the early 1800s that women had only three occupations from which to choose:

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[2]Arthur Charles Cole, A Hundred Years of Mount Holyoke College: The Evolution of an Educational Ideal (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), p. 3; and Elaine Kendall, "Peculiar Institutions," an Informal History of the Seven Sister Colleges (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), p. 15.

[3]Kendall, Peculiar Institutions, p. 12.

"domestic work, needlework, and the streets."[4] Even by the 1850s and 1860s, it was still the case that women "had to accept the traditional future of marriage and motherhood or as spinsters to confront the alternatives of becoming mantilla makers or missionaries--of education or religion."[5] This research follows the reasons why women continued to be held in occupational restraint in the 1800s.

Changes can be traced through the 1800s which illustrate why women entered teaching or engaged in religious work to such a great extent. The case of teaching in particular will be followed because the "choice" of a profession which had so little monetary or social reward shows how seriously limited were women's occupational choices--teaching was preferable (at least possible for middle-class women) to factory work or domestic service. While teaching was an alternative for some women, in order to avoid textile mill work or domestic service, it will be shown in conclusion that teaching was an outlet for other women.[6] Through the profession of education, women could first exercise and develop their skills, and later use them to the benefit of their sex.

## Forces of Change

The 1800s were years during which major changes occurred occupationally, socially, and demographically in the U.S. The Industrial

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[4]Louise Schutz Boas, Woman's Education Begins; The Rise of the Women's College (Norton, Massachusetts: Wheaton College Press, 1935; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1971), p. 30.

[5]Cole, Holyoke, p. 115.

[6]Keith E. Melder, "Woman's High Calling, the Teaching Profession in America, 1830-1960," American Studies 13 (Fall 1972):25.

Revolution had closely followed the American Revolution and was changing the face of work. The great migration westward had started and was changing the population balance--men were moving West, but most women were staying in the East. These two major forces had a combined impact of changing the life styles of most Americans, especially women.

The industrialization of America struck at the core of the American life style--family life. The family as a self-supportive economic unit of an agricultural economy was to lose this function as men moved out of the home and into the public world of work, and women became assigned to the private world of domestic work.[7]

A dichotomy arose, however, as more and more men moved westward. The prevailing view of women was that they constituted a domestic workforce; the growing view, a result of the shortage of male workers, was that women constituted a basic industrial workforce.[8] Women were assigned to factory work out of economic need for both themselves and manufacturers.

Women in the East in the 1800s increasingly had to become self-sufficient. With fewer men available with whom they could assume the traditional role of wife and mother, they had to choose from among alternatives. Textile mill work was chief among these. "Women and girls formed from two-thirds to three-fourths of the total numbers of factory workers in the first half of the 1800s, and in some places as much as

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[7]Elizabeth Duncan Koontz, The Best Kept Secret of the Past 5,000 Years; Women are Ready for Leadership in Education (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1972), p. 15; and Gerda Lerner, ed., The Female Experience: An American Documentary (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1977), xxx.

[8]Carroll, Liberating, p. 289.

nine-tenths."[9] Though this work was undesirable, it did mark a change for women--the dawn of their economic independence.

Dependence on men also created a change in life style (but not career) for some women because a basic change occurred in the life cycle. Men who did remain in the East were delaying marriage because of their entry into new careers. These careers were different from those traditional ones which required no period of establishment. Men involved in new types of work were often required to move far from their homes. This situation caused them to put off marriage until they had enough money saved to start a home and marry. A "waiting period" for women was created and many had to find something to do to survive, until they married.[10]

The reasons mentioned above point out how industrialization and the Westward Migration brought, "for all women, . . . a lowering of status and a shrinking of opportunity."[11] Women were still tied to the fate of the family, after the family had ceased to be an economic force.

The needs and demands of an industrial society did ultimately have a positive outcome on the education of women. Industrialization brought with it a need for more educated workers who were trained in the "way" of business. Industrialization also attracted many immigrants who needed the socialization provided in schools.

Industrialization, immigration, and urbanization created in the

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[9]Koontz, Best Kept Secret, p. 15.

[10]David F. Allmendinger, Jr., "Mount Holyoke Students Encounter the Need for Life-Planning, 1837-1850," History of Education Quarterly 19 (Spring 1979):26.

[11]Lerner, Female Experience, xxxii.

1800s the need for the social service of education, a role for women which became justified by their very "nature."[12]

The gradual opening of educational opportunities to a small group of women resulted in their aspirations for more and more education for more and more women.[13] Holding on to the shirttail of the Common School Movement, women were able to justify their educational preparation as necessary for their roles as teachers and as the guardians of the American home. Teaching opportunities for women expanded as rapidly as the spread of the common schools, and for good reason. Common schooling was expensive, and women teachers cost less than men.[14]

Female seminaries, private, proprietary institutions for women's education (these will be discussed later) were a major source of teachers for the common schools. These schools were greatest in number from the 1830s to the late 1850s and had strong ties with a third major force of the 1800s--Missionary Activity.

The clergy in the U.S. had been "newly removed from authority in the public realm" in the 1800s, a result of the influence of industrialism and its emphasis on the profit, rather than the spiritual, motive in life.[15] Clergymen perceived the female seminary and the common school movements, rather than the church, as "the nineteenth century

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[12]Roberta Frankfort, Collegiate Women; Domesticity and Career in Turn-of-the-Century America (New York: New York University Press, 1977), p. 90.

[13]Lerner, Female Experience, xxxii.

[14]Thomas Woody, A History of Women's Education in the United States (New York: The Science Press, 1929), p. 460.

[15]Linda J. Nicholson, "Women and Schooling," Educational Theory 30 (Summer 1980):229.

battleground for loyalty and social control of new generations."[16] The schools were viewed as a rich field for indoctrination, with teachers as the nonsecular counterparts of ministers.

Women were encouraged to participate in their moral guardianship roles even beyond the home and schools. Many educated women of the nineteenth century formed benevolent and religious organizations; joined the antislavery movement; signed petitions, but they were not able to escape the limits of their guardianship role. Nineteenth-century women were not allowed to speak in public or hold political office.[17] These conditions supported barriers to education for women.

Despite barriers, many nineteenth-century women gained some degree of education. The forces of change which preceded the Civil War gave women opportunities to gain some form of economic survival skills through education. As women teachers grew in number in primary school positions, they proved their capacities to teach. With the Civil War, women filled the ranks left empty by men, earned the money necessary for their survival, and justified their further education at the high school and, later, the college level.[18]

The forces of change on the one hand liberated women, but on the other hand further subjugated them.[19] "With the increasing removal of productive activities from the home to the factory, the tasks of the

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[16]Keith Melder, "Mask of Oppression: The Female Seminary Movement in the United States," New York History 55 (July 1974):277.

[17]Melder, "High Calling," p. 27.

[18]Kendall, Peculiar Institutions, p. 19.

[19]Koontz, Best Kept Secret, p. 15.

household and thus the tasks of women became redefined."[20] This shifting and reformulation of woman's status most seriously affected middle-class women; the new status was not a result of women's work in the factory, but an effect of industrialization. Changes for nineteenth-century women of the lower class were not to parallel those of the middle class.[21] "The Cult of True Womanhood"[22] became a concept applicable only to those women for whom industrialization had created leisure time.

## Redefinition of Women's Status

Woman's earlier role in the family was replaced, in the 1830s to 1860s, with one which was "in fact idleness, expressed positively as gentility."[23] This cultural manifestation was labelled "True Womanhood" and was long "to influence both the standards of the sex and American social institutions."[24] This new role, a product of the new leisure, made the activity of consumption a semi-skilled occupation in which women were to gain recognition as "wise shoppers."[25] The limitations and long-range implications of such a role were significant. As Barbara

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[20]Nicholson, "Women," p. 229.

[21]Glenda Riley, "Origins of the Argument for Improved Female Education," History of Education Quarterly 9 (Winter 1969):455.

[22]Carroll, Liberating, p. 284; Nicholson, "Women," p. 229; and Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," American Quarterly 18 (Summer 1966):151.

[23]Carroll, Liberating, p. 284.

[24]Cole, Holyoke, pp. 114-115.

[25]Nicholson, "Women," p. 229.

Welter has concluded, some women were "hostages in the home."[26] The result was that a standard of behavior for American women emerged which was based on attributes necessary for subservience.

Four cardinal virtues of True Womanhood fostered the adoption of attributes necessary for nineteenth-century woman to fulfill her social role. These virtues were piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.[27] With these behaviors, women were equipped to perform as "the guardian of the nursery, the companion of childhood, and the constant model of imitation."[28] The domestic ideal shaped the lives of those who chose it, and ostracized those who rejected it. Its merits were expounded, not questioned, a situation which indicates this ideal was being propagated.[29]

The imposition of the domestic ideal on women found fertile soil in the nineteenth century. With the redefinition of their status, the "essentially domestic character of woman's true interests" became firmly established.[30] The fear, however, of many persons, including educators, was that if women became educated, they would become "a threat to the established and symbiotic pattern of American family life."[31] Maintaining the "sanqity" of the home was still considered woman's primary

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[26]Welter, "True Womanhood," p. 151.

[27]Ibid., p. 152.

[28]Barbara M. Cross, ed., The Educated Woman in America (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1965), p. 67.

[29]Frankfort, Collegiate Women, xiii-xiv.

[30]Boas, Women's College, p. 57.

[31]Kendall, Peculiar Institutions, p. 23.

responsibility, and even women who achieved careers in education did not advocate careers for other women.[32] Education for women was to increase their influence as moral guardians, not as politicians or competitors in the public world.

The moral guardian role society prescribed for women was logically extended to teaching in the 1800s. With the assumption of teaching responsibilities, women needed better educational preparation. The result was support, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, for the extension and improvement of education for women.

The "less public" reason for the extension of schooling to include women was based on economy and the shortage of male teachers.[33] The need to bring the literacy level of women up to an acceptable standard for teaching was a fact, but the "enhancement" value of women as teachers was really just a pretty picture of their entry into the educational scene. Their "softening influence [and] natural tendencies toward the aesthetic" were touted as natural abilities which would "lead men away from the gross,"[34] and as models of correctness and morality, well-educated teachers would perform their duties to the satisfaction of society. Women were fully indoctrinated to perform in these roles.

Schooling for women was also held up as the best preparation for motherhood. Because women teachers constantly married, their education was considered not wasted. They would simply apply it directly to the

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[32]Boas, Women's Colleges, p. 57.

[33]Nancy Green, "Female Education and School Competition: 1820-1850," History of Education Quarterly 18 (Summer 1978):129-130.

[34]Boas, Women's Colleges, p. 254.

private sphere--the home. Effective teachers would make effective mothers, it was believed, but, as "moral guardians," no matter whether they occupied the public or the private sphere, women had to be equipped for the job.[35]

## Separate Spheres

The distinction between men's work and women's work occurred when the economic function of the family was broken, and men's work moved out of the home. Work in the public sphere, the marketplace, was valued by cash; work in the private place, the home, was devalued because it had no cash reward.[36] The domain of women's work, the domestic sphere, was considered an appropriate assignment in the division of labor between the sexes because of women's lesser "capacity" to participate in physical work outside the home.

Woman's assignment to a separate sphere of influence occurred in the period from 1790 to 1830 when new roles for women were emerging. She became, however, classified as "inferior" by not "fully participating" in the work of the new society.[37] The devaluing of her position was, therefore, a result of the social control which prohibited her from fully participating.

These women were limited not only by lack of opportunities for

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[35]Green, "Competition," p. 130.

[36]Lerner, Female Experience, xxx.

[37]Ibid.; and Jill K. Conway, "Perspectives on the History of Women's Education in the United States," in History, Education, and Public Policy, ed. Donald R. Warren (Berkeley, California: McCutchan Publishing Company, 1978), p. 277.

"respectable" employment outside the home, they also had no legal existence apart from their husbands, through which power they could effect change. In the 1840s and 1850s, laws were passed in some states to correct this condition, but the damage had been done.[38] Women could not move from "chattal" status to "equal" status in a short period of time, even in the eyes of the law.[39] Groundwork for change needed to be laid.

The demarcation of sexual spheres was a barrier to the recognition of women's abilities, despite the fact that it paved the way for the emergence, in the 1830s, of women teachers charged with the education of the young.[40] No matter the shift of jobs from one location to another (in this case, from the home to the school) the essential nature of the work was still "woman's." The characteristic of women's work--poor pay, low status, no security--were descriptive of the compensatory role women played in relation to men.[41]

The barriers women faced as a result of the separation of spheres could not be overcome as long as they played compensatory roles. Efforts to enter into competition with men, however, were thwarted because of gender coding.

Women in the nineteenth century were not only "defined politically, economically, and socially by their familial roles," they were

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[38]Welter, "True Womanhood."

[39]Kathryn G. Heath, "Our Heritage Speaks," Journal of NAWDAC 39 (Winter 1976):90.

[40]Conway, "Perspectives," p. 277.

[41]Ibid., p. 278; and Lerner, Female Experience, xxxi.

also defined by differences in "character traits" reflective of the differences in spheres.[42] It was assumed (and sometimes "scientifically proven)[43] that, because activities outside the home were importantly different from those performed at home, the personalities of those who carried out such activities were necessarily different, too. The polarization of roles resulted in the polarization of personality characteristics.

Men were characterized in the nineteenth century as aggressive, exploitive, materialistic, unchaste, impious, and mobile. Women were characterized as passive, delicate, pure, pious, maternal, domestic, and self-sacrificing.[44] Women not only came to occupy a separate sphere because of economic and social forces, they also came to be labelled as the "weaker sex."[45] Femininity became associated with silliness, sentimentality, decorativeness, and dependence.

People are, of course, assigned to specific roles in every society and are "indoctrinated to perform to the expectations and values of their society."[46] For women, "this has always meant social indoctrination to a value system which imposed upon them restrictions on the

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[42]Nicholson, "Women," pp. 229-230.

[43]Thorndike and Hall believed that heredity was more important than environment and that women were different from men in what they inherited. Maxine Seller, "G. Stanley Hall and Edward Thorndike on the Education of Women: Theory and Policy in the Progressive Era," Educational Studies 2 (Summer 1980):370.

[44]Melder, "Mask," p. 264.

[45]Anne Firor Scott, "The Ever Widening Circle: The Diffusion of Feminist Values from the Troy Female Seminary, 1822-1872," History of Education Quarterly 19 (Spring 1979):20.

[46]Lerner, Female Experience, xxvii.

range of their choices greater than those imposed on men."[47] Women's creativity was channeled to perpetuate the situation into which they were socialized. They were indoctrinated to accept the restrictions on their lives.

The influences which brought women to separate sphere status also brought an important opportunity for women to begin to prepare themselves to change their condition. The drive to expand and reform education, the separation of women from men in the public sphere, and the religious awakening all combined to encourage education--private and public--for women. Women grabbed this opportunity and, though their ideas about the value and use of education often differed radically, overcame a major restriction on their lives: they gained access to formal education.

## Private and Public Education

From the 1780s to the 1820s, educational opportunities for women developed "in bits and pieces."[48] "Pre-seminaries" existed in a few convents in the South, and other religious orders, such as the Moravians and the Quakers, had supported a very basic and minimal kind of female education (a little beyond "Mother's Knee") in the eighteenth century, but none offered advanced education.[49]

Despite the growing common school movement, secondary education was not considered a public responsibility. Many private educational

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Scott, "Widening Circle," p. 23.

[49] Kendall, Peculiar Institutions, p. 10.

institutions developed as a response to this situation, rather than as elitist institutions established to perpetuate class divisions.

Academies were established which allowed, on a tuition basis, students (mostly males) to obtain education beyond the elementary level. Because of the cost, such institutions, from the beginning, were inaccessible to many.[50] These schools were respectable academically, were considered to have "religious trustworthiness," but were sometimes found to be not as solid or useful in educating as compared to the common schools.[51] They were college or "seminary" (Harvard and Yale, for example) preparatory institutions for the most part (for men of course) but the more serious ventures in special academies were to become labelled "female seminaries."[52] These institutions had a "more ambitious role in mind in widening the educational horizon of women";[53] they sought to provide the equivalent of a "college" education for women, without the masculine connotation of the label.

Early female seminary development was proprietary, temporary, and often unsuccessful. A group of pioneers did emerge, however, who established a firm structure for female education which was to last until women's colleges were formed to replace seminaries. The work of Emma

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[50]Edward J. Power, The Transit of Learning; A Social and Cultural Interpretation of American Educational History (Sherman Oaks, California: Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), p. 174.

[51]Cole, Holyoke, p. 3.

[52]Seminary was a generic term in the early 1800s. It could refer to an institution at which men were prepared for the ministry, or it could, and from the 1830s to the 1860s it was most associated with women's education, refer to female educational institutions. Here, it will be used solely to describe the latter.

[53]Cole, Holyoke, p. 3.

Willard, Mary Lyon, Catherine Beecher, and Zilpah Grant virtually marked the beginning of secondary and higher education for women.

Emma Willard was one of the first to propose improvements in female education. Her "plan," circulated in 1819, has been called the "Magna Carta of Women's Education," and its approval by the state legislature of Massachusetts led to the chartering of Troy Female Seminary.[54]

The opening of the Troy Female Seminary, the "child" of Willard, in 1821, marked what was to become the first successful attempt to establish a female seminary with high academic standards. With its emphasis on domestic and religious instruction, as well as offerings of literature, philosophy, and mathematics, Troy offered the best academic opportunities available to women at that time.[55] Throughout her life, Willard continued to work to see her ideas realized in fact. She was probably the first woman superintendent of a school (1840)[56] and her work with significant male educational reformers most surely advanced the cause for women's education, and their subsequent entry into the field of teaching.

Mary Lyon, Zilpah Grant, and Catherine Beecher were all contemporaries who opened seminaries in the mid-1820s, and who expanded on Willard's ideas. Lyon was later, 1837, to open Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, a forerunner and model for women's colleges, which later became

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[54]Mildred Sandison Fenner and Eleanor C. Fishburn, Pioneer American Educators (Washington, D.C.: Hugh Burch-Horace Mann Fund, National Education Association, 1944), p. 33.

[55]Cole, Holyoke, pp. 4-5; and Scott, "Widening Circle," p. 23.

[56]Nicholson, "Women," p. 40.

Mount Holyoke college. These seminaries generally provided education for women beyond the age of twelve, but they each offered their own curricula and set their own standards.[57] To summarize the effects of female seminaries on women's education, we can say that they set standards for admission, courses of study, texts, graduation and, most importantly, some general guidelines for the preparation of teachers which followed religious, moral, and domestic standards set for women in the nineteenth century.

Many people of the 1800s believed female seminaries were "stretching" the standards set for women too far. To justify education for women, these early pioneers stated that it was important to educate women for life, not for a specific position in life.[58] Women such as Emma Willard, however, believed that preparation for teaching was merely an extension of woman's domestic role, not a position of work which conflicted with traditional ideas of woman's "place."

Expanding women's involvement in teaching was an important way to justify their education. Women educators realized that the major barrier to independence and respectability was lack of education. Women's involvement in schooling increased because it was perceived as an "avenue into a productive role . . . outside the home."[59] The growth of the common school movement created the need for teaching new positions

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[57]Green, "Competition," p. 130; and Riley, "Origins," p. 262.

[58]Roberta Wein, "Women's Colleges and Domesticity, 1875-1918," History of Education Quarterly 14 (Spring 1974):40.

[59]Green, "Competition," p. 139.

which were filled by women. Escape from the domestic sphere began.

The Common School Movement grew out of the public concern that at least a "modicum" of schooling should be provided to all children.[60] "The goal of antebellum school reformers was to build an institution which could act as a stabilizing agent, forming character and preserving morality."[61] Bringing the poor to accept the values of the larger society was expected to create across-class commonality. Social control was not a label applicable only to women's education in the nineteenth century.

In the North, the birthplace of common schooling, the first public high school to admit girls did so in 1826 and, by 1830, primary education had been extended to girls almost everywhere.[62] In the South, public schooling was quite a different matter. Provisions were made in every Southern state for common schools but "the prevailing sentiment . . . opposed secular education and favored church schools."[63] These schools were not only segregated by race, but also by sex. Coeducation was a development of the North, a result mainly of economy and the desire to socialize as many students as possible.[64] Southern schooling

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[60]Elizabeth Alden Green, Mary Lyon and Mount Holyoke: Opening the Gates (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1979), xiv.

[61]Green, "Competition," p. 138.

[62]Cole, Holyoke, p. 13.

[63]Mrs. I. M. E. Blandin, History of Higher Education of Women in the South; Prior to 1860 (Washington, D.C.: Zenger Publishing Co., Inc., reprint ed., New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1975), pp. 16, 18.

[64]James Monroe Taylor, Before Vassar Opened; A Contribution to the History of the Higher Education of Women in America (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1914, reprint 1972).

will not be discussed at any greater length because of its separateness from the mainstream developments in the North.

One other reason for the public education of women was the growing awareness of their social contribution. For this reason, as well as reasons of economy, the struggle for common schooling was combined with the struggle for advancing the education of women.

Special teacher training became a major purpose of female seminaries in order to provide a pool of teachers for the common schools.[65] As has been mentioned, the idea of advanced education for women and preparation for teaching was proposed in the 1820s, but took more definite form in the 1830s. Normal schools were still not great in number, and it was not until educational reformers pushed for public normal schools that this movement expanded.

Horace Mann and Henry Barnard both were proponents of females as teachers in the common schools. They thought women would do a better job than men with the young children and saw teaching as a logical extension of woman's role as mother.[66] Barnard enlisted the aid of Emma Willard in the late 1830s to advance the common school movement. This was a good choice because Willard was also dedicated to women's education. In fact, by the time Mann founded the first public normal school in 1839, Willard already boasted 200 graduates from her seminary.[67]

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[65]Patricia Sexton, Women in Education (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1976), pp. 45-46, 52.

[66]Dorothy S. Russell, "Women's Entry Into Teaching: Myths and Realities," Kappa Delta Pi Record 16 (December 1979):41.

[67]Fenner, Pioneer, p. 37; and Rose Friedman, Freedom Builders; Great Teachers from Socrates to John Dewey (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968), p. 208.

Willard, Mann, and Barnard spread their ideas about the training of teachers around the country. Willard in particular travelled 8,000 miles through the West and the South from 1845 to 1846 in an effort to help raise the educational standards of the common schools.[68] Teachers were recruited for these schools from the Eastern seminaries and a few in the Midwest, and, as women gradually replaced men, the expansion of their role from the home to the classroom to other parts of the country or abroad were given respect through their new role definition, "missionary educators."[69]

## Christian Benevolence

Women became missionary-teachers for two "natural" reasons. They were considered "naturally" religious, and teaching was advocated as a "natural" profession for women.[70] "Both educators and the clergy vested teaching with an aura of sanctity."[71] Education became called a "holy ministry" and it naturally followed that teaching would be considered "doing good" and that the effort to tame the West with education, or to spread Christianity abroad, would draw more and more women into the missionary field.[72]

It is interesting to note that women were considered by some, naturally religious, yet religion was viewed by many other persons in the

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[68]Friedman, Builders, p. 209.

[69]Melder, "Mask," p. 273.

[70]Nicholson, "Women," p. 231; Welter, "True Womanhood," p. 153; and Woody, Women's Education, p. 462.

[71]Russell, "Myths and Realities," p. 43.

[72]Ibid.

nineteenth century as a "tranquilizer for the many undefined longings" of women; it was "better to pray than to think."[73] Religion also was valued for another reason; it did not take women from their proper spheres, their homes. This heavy emphasis on controlling thought was finally met with opposition from those persons who advocated education for women.

Controlling the "undefined longings" of women did not end, however, with the introduction of women's seminaries. These institutions, to satisfy those who objected to the "dangers" of education for women, as well as to follow the personal beliefs of their founders, offered "religious guarantees." These usually consisted of religion classes, frequent meditation, compulsory chapel attendance, and, occasionally, revival meetings. The goal of such a curriculum was to form a sound and virtuous character in women who were devoting so much of their mental activity to the rigors of academic study.[74] Out of this evangelistic atmosphere of the 1820s came the idea that education should be preparation for life, not a profession, and that the best, most natural life for a woman would be one of Christian service, consisting of motherhood, missionary work, or teaching.

Many young women who attended seminaries were "motivated by high ideals of service rather than purely intellectual ambition."[75] Many also

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[73]Welter, "True Womanhood," p. 153.

[74]Ibid., pp. 153-154; Mary Antony De Wolfe Howe, Classic Shades; Five Leaders of Learning and Their Colleges (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1928), p. 66; and Kendall, Peculiar Institutions, p. 25.

[75]Green, Lyon, p. 182.

felt morally obliged to teach because they had been "entrusted" by God with "the tender minds of children."[26] Others sought to take their teaching abilities to far-away countries. For these women, spreading Christianity throughout the world undoubtedly had great romantic and escape value.[77]

Those women who pursued missionary teaching service in the U.S. were either recruited to "Christianize the West" or to educate the destitute in both urban and rural areas of the East, South, and mid-West U.S.[78] The call for the pious and well-qualified went out from churches, seminaries, and by word of mouth. Many contacts were established through which women by the hundreds were recruited for teaching.[79]

As the demand for teachers rose, women entered the profession, but for many different personal reasons. Some women were truly pious and dedicated to a Christian service ideal, others were eager to escape their known lives for the unknown, others needed the money. It is sad to note that many women had to resort to teaching to support themselves, because female teachers usually earned one-third to two-thirds less than the amount paid to male teachers.[80] The reasoning behind this treatment was the idea of service. Women were persuaded to enter teaching, and paid

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[76]Kendall, Peculiar Institutions, p. 25.

[77]Cole, Holyoke, pp. 115-116.

[78]Russell, "Myths and Realities," p. 43; and Melder, "High Calling," p. 25.

[79]Melder, "High Calling," p. 25; and David F. Allmendinger, Jr., "History and the Usefulness of Women's Education," History of Education Quarterly 19 (Spring 1979):122.

[80]Russell, "Myths and Realities," p. 41.

low salaries, because they were told they could expect a greater reward than men, in heaven. Some of them, because of their unfailing dedication and their great physical and mental expenditures got this reward earlier than others.

## Questions of Control

Schooling for women has been shown to result from the influence of nineteenth-century forces which created the basic conditions requisite for women to enter the educational workforce. Whether at home or in the school, women still functioned within the social sphere to which they were assigned.

Schools have never been gender neutral. Schooling itself "has been primarily viewed as necessary only for those who are expected to make a transition from the private sphere into the public sphere and this has been true primarily for young men."[81] Women have had restrictions placed on the amount and quality of their education, such as in Dame schools and in all female, domestically-oriented seminaries, but "gender bias" has not always meant exclusion. Women may have been excluded from educational opportunities at various times and in various places in history, but the intent has been more to educate males first than to totally exclude women.[82]

Keeping women's education separate and unequal was compatible with the thinking (or lack of it) of many people in the nineteenth century. Segregating women into separate and less rigorous programs also

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[81] Nicholson, "Women," p. 236.

[82] Ibid., p. 231.

neutralized them as competitors, both in the classroom and in the marketplace.[83] "While most men had little to lose from female emancipation in any direct and self-interested sense, many certainly felt they had something to lose in a larger psychological sense."[84] The manipulation of women in education and in the labor force allowed opponents of women's emancipation to gain control over this group, which had the potential to become united and effect serious changes in a male-dominated society.

Whether women were exploited by mill-owners, ministers, or educational reformers, they never lost their monetary value. Cheap meek labor has always been prized by we Americans who know the value of a dollar, if not the value of female work.

Gender bias did not mean that women were excluded from teaching. The teaching profession became "feminized" in the nineteenth century because the expansion of public education demanded greater numbers of teachers, and, by the second half of the century, this expansion had put a strain on the budgets of many town governments.[85] They combatted this condition by hiring women. Granted, the shortage of male teachers also contributed to the need to hire females, but "if women had not been cheaper than men," they would not have replaced them.[86]

Public arguments for women's education were, of course, quite different from private considerations. "Sentiment, need, and economics

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[83]Seller, "Progressive Era," p. 373.

[84]Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, The Academic Revolution (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 292.

[85]Nicholson, "Women," p. 230.

[86]Russell, "Myths and Realities," pp. 41-42.

dictated that women would be the principal members of the new teaching profession."[87] These were ideas obscured by pronouncements of women's superior moral and nurturing powers. Women were controlled educationally, socially, and monetarily, but fortunately they developed intellectually despite efforts to control their thinking.

Women were controlled in education in another way. They were not often hired for high school positions because it was believed that they could not handle the older boys.[88] This point may well have been a coverup because as educational bureaucracies formed in the second half of the nineteenth century they drew on high school faculty to make up their numbers. Excluding women from entry-level positions acted to keep them out, for the most part, of bureaucratic power positions.

Women as teachers meant a group easily subordinated. Complacent followers were needed within the hierarchical organization of schools, and nineteenth-century women had been socialized in the cardinal virtue of submission. They were no threat to the dominant male power structure.[89]

Women were generally considered less ambitious than men, but an interesting point of contention concerns the restrictions placed on married teachers. Many schools would not allow a married woman to teach. This bias has been interpreted by David Tyack to mean that the problems school boards faced from married (more financially and socially secure)

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[87] Ibid.; and Melder, "High Calling," p. 20.

[88] Russel, "Myths and Realities," p. 41.

[89] Ibid., pp. 28, 42.

women caused them to look for the more acquiescent unmarried ones.[90]

Whatever the level of submissiveness of the woman, the fact was that women rapidly increased in number in the ranks of nineteenth-century educators. By 1870, 59 percent of all public school teachers were female, and by the end of the century this figure had swollen to 70 percent.[91] Women had gained entry, though not control, in the education profession.

## Conclusions

Social control was a comprehensive influence in the lives of nineteenth-century women. Defined by their physiology; ascribed by the attributes of their "emotional, spiritual" natures; assigned social status determined by their sphere of influence; restricted in educational opportunities; women struggled to take control of their lives from the hands of those manipulating those lives. Women began to escape suppression as they gained education.

Five conclusions drawn from the research make up this section: (1) physiology is not destiny, (2) women's education became legitimized, (3) women gained leverage with literacy, (4) women participated in their own subordination, and (5) they earned the rights to learn, to teach, to think; other rights have followed. This discussion will center on how women were able to escape the narrow limits society placed on their abilities, as well as how they were hindered.

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[90]David B. Tyack, The One Best System (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 60.

[91]Ibid., p. 61.

Physiology is Not Destiny

Women have, historically, been subordinate in society because they have had a lesser capacity for physical work. It had, therefore, become accepted by the nineteenth century that it was woman's biological destiny to serve as the socializer of children, and through this role "achieve her main social definition."[92] The indoctrination of middle-class women into the role of "lady" and moral guardian, "the professionalization of occupations formerly open to them," and their exclusion from access to equal educational opportunities, "actually meant a lowering of status and a narrowing" of life opportunities.[93] Social definition for women came to mean that their "place" was to remain in the home, with lowered economic (status) value applied to their work.

The narrow definition of women as homebodies created a "moral/intellectual dichotomy" because it soon became clear that women were "naturally" suited for the role of teaching outside the home.[94] This movement was most significant for women, and has sometimes been called the "oddity" of teaching as a women's profession because it "occurred in a society which firmly believed that a woman's place was at home and that women's minds were inferior to men's."[95] The "mannish" schoolmarm (a woman often left home at the cost of her femininity) became the stereotype; the result of a situation in which the separation of the roles of the sexes could not be bridged.

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[92]Carroll, Liberating, p. 386.

[93]Lerner, Female Experience, xxxi-xxxii.

[94]Green, "Competition," p. 134.

[95]Nicholson, "Women," p. 231.

Though educational opportunities were gradually opened to women, the calming and persuasive arguments for education used to develop "their full natural potential as women," were not so effective in overcoming restrictions as simple economics.[96] The right to learn was expanded to include women because of their economic value as teachers, their social value as moral guardians, and their practical value as effective teachers.

It is, therefore, "probably more valid to attribute [the rise in the number of female teachers] to the willingness of men to give up a profession that offered neither wealth nor respect for a more rewarding position in industry."[97] Women grabbed this opportunity to escape their narrow, societally defined role, despite the fact that what happened was that their "vocation's" setting changed, "not its sex-role definition or its inferior compensation at a time when financial reward was a definition of prestige."[98] Teaching moved from the home to the schools and became a woman's profession "by default and by rationalization."[99] Women proved, however, that they could not forever be bound by their physiology; their true destiny has been their intellect.

Women's Education Became Legitimized

Literacy, for women, was something of a novelty in the first half

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[96]Kendall, Peculiar Institutions, p. 25; and Melder, "Mask," p. 261.

[97]Riley, "Origins," p. 466.

[98]Melder, "High Calling," p. 28.

[99]Kendall, Peculiar Institutions, pp. 27-28.

of the nineteenth century.[100] Even when schooling was extended to women, it was often inferior in quality as compared to that offered to men. To earn the right to learn, in a society which believed learning to be something of which women were not capable (many were the people who believed women could go mad from the effects of concentrated study) was the first step toward intellectual emancipation.

Pioneering institutions, such as Mount Holyoke and Oberlin, provided women with access to somewhat equal schooling. Though the very existence of female seminaries and these examples of institutions of higher education created for or opened to women helped legitimize women's education, the controversy over woman's brain capacity continued.

The academic success of seminary students and the proof of women's abilities as teachers, however, soon "disloged this assumption about sex-related intelligence."[101] Notice the use of the word dislodged; such assumptions could only be removed from influence as they were replaced by long-term proof of women's abilities. Such proof was to be accumulated as women gained control over their lives.

## Women Gained "Leverage with Literacy"[102]

The challenge of women's education to "patriarchal prejudices and institutional restrictions" was effective in creating arguments for women's education and in opening educational opportunities.[103] "The

[100] Ibid., p. 9.

[101] Melder, "Mask."

[102] Kendall, Peculiar Institutions, p. 9.

[103] Lerner, Female Experience, p. 204.

assimilation of girls as secondary school students on the one hand lent force to the movement for full-scale women's colleges, and on the other was inseparable from the acceptance women were gaining as teachers."[104] The rethinking of the issue of higher education for women was provoked by the Civil War, as men left teaching positions to participate in the war. Women filled their places, particularly at the secondary level. For the "sake" of boys' education, women needed higher education.[105]

Before the Civil War, college was not considered a very appropriate place, even for men. After the Civil War, the female seminary idea was extended upward and the woman's college movement begun. Women not only gained leverage from their own "separate but equal" educational institutions, they also gained added legitimacy from the coeducational-college movement.[106] Inclusion in higher level educational opportunities equipped women with the literacy necessary for them to "lever" their positions in society. Women began to make a case for equal social, political and economic opportunities for all persons in the United States.

## Women Participated in Their Own Subordination

Entry and increased participation by women into education did not mean an altering of woman's status or self-perception. For the most part,

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[104]Green, "Competition," p. 139.

[105]Joellen Watson, "Higher Education for Women in the United States: A Historical Perspective," Educational Studies 8 (Summer 1977): 136-137.

[106]Beth Bradford Gilchrist, The Life of Mary Lyon (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), p. 422; and Frederick Rudolf, The American College and University; a History (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, 1962), pp. 310-311.

women in education did not have clearly defined targets or goals beyond the idea of servi e. They also generally accepted traditional, stereotypical beliefs regarding the personality and appropriate role of women.[107] That some women who were advancing the cause for women's education still stuck to older values does not come as a surprise. Such ambivalence happens "when values are in the process of change."[108] The fact was, however, that whether they were dame schools, female seminaries, or female colleges, schooling was opened to women by women.

That women who were advocates of female education became "consummate politicians, theologians, hygienists and, when necessary, apologists,"[109] shows how they embraced a sexual division of labor. The double standard in education was institutionalized with the seminary movement, and contributed a "mighty power of persuasion and diffusion" to the ideology and values which oppressed women, and which they passed on to their children. Women were not passive victims of social control in the nineteenth century, they were actively involved in helping "support and spread the doctrine of women's subordination and self-sacrifice."[110] The attitudes that remain with us today were perpetuated by women's internalization of the ideology and values of the nineteenth century.[111]

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[107]Frankfort, Collegiate Women, xiv; and Russell, "Myths and Realities," p. 43.

[108]Scott, "Widening Circle," p. 4.

[109]Kindall, Peculiar Institutions, p. 25.

[110]Melder, "Mask," pp. 264, 279.

[111]Lerner, Female Experience, xxvii.

Women Participated in Their Subordination; But Earned the Rights to Learn, to Teach, and to Think--Other Rights Have Followed[112]

The fight to learn, for women, first meant access to educational opportunities. Second, it meant overcoming unfair practices or restrictions in that education offered. Teaching followed and became, for women, "a giant stride toward occupational libertion."[113] Despite the "exalting" of the profession, however, "it nevertheless remained true that it was one of the most lowly, lonely, and unattractive means to a living."[114] It is therefore clear that learning and teaching alone were not enough to change the condition of women's status. They had to elevate their self consciousness, they had to become aware of the wrong of social control, they had to learn to think.

The domestic ideal of the nineteenth century "did not change nearly as much as women's reactions to it, particularly in the latter part of the nineteenth century."[115] Women began to see higher education as a way to challenge the domestic ideal and though the movement for higher education of women "in no sense [became] popular in the nineteenth century . . . nonetheless the battle had been won on many fronts."[116]

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[112]Ibid., p. 203.

[113]Sexton, Education, p. 52.

[114]Woody, Women's Education, p. 489.

[115]Frankfort, Collegiate Women, xiv.

[116]Rudolf, American College, p. 319.

Women's consciousness of their condition was raised, and they became aware of their power to change it.

Seminary training opened the way for women not only to higher education but also to other social movements. It was a female elite who graduated from seminaries and, later, colleges, and who helped create a "network of women's organizations devoted to modern reform and social amelioration."[117] Radical feminists as well as unsuspecting women became the "carriers of the newer values, and [participated in] the spread of feminist ideas."[118] Education was a force of the nineteenth century which led to the movement for greater social control for women. Contingent on their political equality, social control became equated with suffrage and women took one step closer to social emancipation.

The major conclusion of this paper is that no one label can describe the condition, created by social control, of nineteenth-century American women. The choice of one label from the list on the next page is not possible--they all applied at different times and in different places and in different ways--or appropriate, because that choice would be a matter of personal interpretation. It is the stand of this writer that it is actions rather than decisions alone which determine the human condition. If we are to improve that condition, we must responsibly remove restraints to choice.

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[117]Melder, "Mask," p. 278.

[118]Scott, "Widening Circle," p. 20.

For consideration:

OPPRESSION: weighed down (mentally); treated tyrannically

SUBORDINATION: placed in an inferior or lower order; secondary; minor

DISCRIMINATION: prejudice or partiality in attitudes, actions, etc.

SUBJUGATION: brought under dominion, conquered, made subservient

SUPPRESSION: kept under restraint; put down; subdued; to withhold from knowledge or publication, as a book, news, etc.

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