

SECOND EDITION



Women and the American Experience

A CONCISE HISTORY



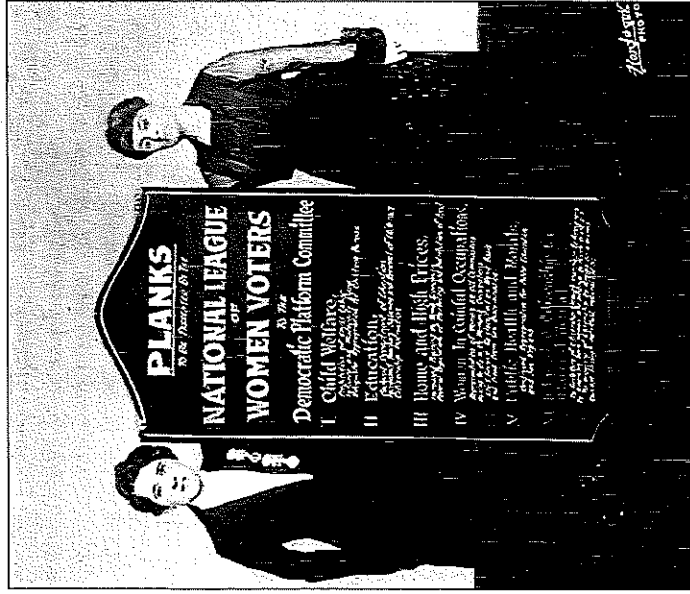
Nancy Woloch

Barnard College

2002



Boston Burr Ridge, IL Dubuque, IA Madison, WI New York
San Francisco St. Louis Bangkok Bogotá Caracas Kuala Lumpur
Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City Milan Montreal New Delhi



Founded in 1920, the League of Women Voters (LWV) represented the mainstream of postsuffrage feminism. Determined to promote child welfare, protect women workers, and educate the female electorate, it also attempted to shape the planks of party platforms. But to younger women of the 1920s, the LWV conveyed a staid, old-fashioned image. The long tradition of female association was losing its appeal. (*Library of Congress*)

Economic independence was in fact the new frontier of feminism in the 1920s. A change of direction from the service-oriented, progressive goals of the presuffrage era, it was also a shift of emphasis from public cause to private career, from society to self.

ASPIRATION AND CAREER

In *Concerning Women*, a feminist primer of 1926, Suzanne LaFollette argued that sexual equality could be based only on economic independence. Women's main achievement had been their entry into the labor force—into factories, shops, schools, and professions, “invading every field that had been held the special province of men,” LaFollette wrote. “This is the great unconscious and unorganized women's movement.” After World War I, the aspiration for economic independence grew

The proportion of women in the labor force remained unchanged, about 25 percent. But the numbers of working women increased, more middle-class women became wage earners, and the types of work women did changed. Characteristically, they moved in two directions at once.

On the one hand, fewer women worked at the rock bottom of the vocation ladder, as domestics, and more entered white-collar jobs, such as clerical and sales. New vocations opened up in the business and professional worlds. Educated women whose numbers continually rose, surged into professional work. Many of them strove to combine careers and marriage, another major innovation. In the 1920s the proportion of women wage earners who were married rose 25 percent with the greatest increase among women in their twenties and thirties. On the other hand, the decade's aspirations collided with its limitations. Traditional male professions closed ranks against female entry. Most women were confined to “women's professions,” and in the business world, to lower-level job categories. Disparities between men and women rose as more women entered the labor market. Final gains of the decade were all middle-class gains. In industry, where women faced protective laws and weakened unions, the situation was especially bleak.

World War I created no enduring jobs for women. Some 16,000 women overseas under the auspices of the American Expeditionary Force, mainly though exclusively as nurses, clerical workers, canteen workers, and telephone operators at home, more than 12,000 women enlisted in the Navy and Marine Corps, a major innovation; tens of thousands civilian women worked in army offices and hospitals; many others found posts in industry. They worked in iron, steel, and munitions plants, as well as in other traditionally male jobs, such as those of streetcar conductors and railroad workers. Overall, women's wartime labor challenged conventional gender roles; but new opportunities soon vanished. At the war's end, most emergency appointees were forced to retire, and new options in industry ended. In the woman worker's plight was dismal. Despite the decade's aura of prosperity, industries—such as textiles, in which many women worked—suffered setback and unemployment rose. Women's unionization fell to a new low of 3 percent. Although the labor movement as a whole lost ground, only one working woman in 34 was a union member, as opposed to one man in nine. Because the WTUL shifted its focus from organization to education, and because the AFL, much weakened, had been indifferent if not hostile to women workers, hopes for organization were dim. Efforts to form industrial unions faded when the left was demolished, and workers of the AFL were concentrated in industries from which women were excluded. For most working-class women, work experience in a sex-segregated force remained less a source of economic “independence” than a confirmation of second-class status.

Not surprisingly, the exclusionary facet of protective laws abetted the gap between men and women. Such laws did protect women in fields where they were already in a majority, such as in the garment industry, by regulating hours and improving working conditions. But they had an adverse impact in fields where women worked, since limits on women's hours and functions made men more valuable employees. Moreover, they often excluded women completely, not only from heavy industries but also from the new leisure industries such as bowling alleys

required night work. Women reformers, meanwhile, concentrated their efforts on women who were already active unionists. One ambitious project was the summer school for women workers, started at Bryn Mawr in 1921 by M. Carey Thomas and WTUL member Hilda Smith, a social welfare professor. Intended to train working women for union leadership roles, the summer school inspired its participants and spurred similar programs at other colleges. But it had little impact on the average woman industrial worker who was unlikely to be a union member.

Compared to the woman factory worker, the white-collar worker had many more opportunities. The expanding business world of the 1920s needed clerks, stenographers, typists, switchboard operators, and saleswomen. By 1930, two million women office workers—secretaries, typists, and file clerks—constituted one-fifth of the female labor force. Women's roles in the lower realms of the business world won acclaim; the working girl had found her place at desk, counter, and switchboard. Even the *Ladies' Home Journal*, which had once condemned the exodus of young women from home to office, discovered by 1916 that the secretary "radiated the office with sunshine and sympathetic interest." Female office help became part of the businessman's perquisites. "The businessman begins to feel himself a success when he has a secretary," Lorine Pruette wrote in 1931. "A girl feeds his vanity. . . . The stenographer is wife and mother, child and mistress."

New vocational options included the cosmetics counter and beauty parlor—a bonanza for hairdressers, manicurists, cosmeticians, and the vocational schools that trained them. By 1930, more than 40,000 beauty parlors were open for business in towns and cities across the nation. The expanding market for beauty products fueled the success of such entrepreneurs as rival cosmetic tycoons Elizabeth Arden and Helena Rubinstein, both immigrants, and of Madame C. J. Walker (Sarah Breedlove), a daughter of former slaves, whose 500-agent company sold millions of dollars worth of hair and skin products to a black clientele. After her death in 1919, Madame Walker's thriving enterprise, based in Indianapolis, amassed profits until the depression. Women also entered real estate, retailing, and banking, although they rarely rose beyond the rank of buyer, cashier, or supervisor of other women. Still, a spirit of adventure pervaded the business world, as in advertising. At J. Walter Thompson, the innovative Women's Editorial department, run and staffed by women copywriters, brought in half the agency's earnings. Throughout the decade, moreover, novel vocations for women won applause. The press celebrated such adventures as the nation's first woman kettle-drummer (1922) or deep-sea diver (1924), suggesting new heights of female emancipation. The most exciting frontier of the era, aviation, also attracted women, who joined in stunt flying and barnstorming. Young Amelia Earhart, briefly a teacher and settlement worker, gained acclaim, as Charles Lindbergh did, first as a barnstormer and then, in 1927, by flying across the Atlantic as part of a crew of three. But neither "firsts" nor press coverage created vocations. Every business had special service jobs intended for women, that is, for short-term employees receiving lower pay and doing lower levels of work.

The vanguard of vocational progress was the professions. In the 1920s, the number of women professionals increased by 50 percent and the percentage of women workers in professions rose from 11.9 percent to 14.2 percent. As historian Frank Stricker points out, the proportion of adult women who nursed careers in



Summer schools for women industrial workers were one of the WTUL's most idealistic enterprises. Under the pioneer Bryn Mawr program, financed by union funds, 60 or more women wage earners were brought to the campus for six to eight weeks of academic courses—economics, history, politics, or even creative writing. Although some participants resented the contrast between campus privilege and working-class lives, and others demanded courses that were critical of capitalism, response was usually enthusiastic. "I believe that worker education will lead to a new social order," one student declared. The Bryn Mawr summer school ran from 1919 until 1938, when financial support dwindled. The wage earners above were part of a class in American civilization in 1929.

(Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College)

professions and business rose during the 1920s and would continue to rise after the Great Depression. Three out of four professional women entered "women's fields" in the public sector that progressive women had carved out. And this expanded too, especially in education and social welfare. By the 1920s, the class settlement resident had been replaced by a trained, licensed, salaried worker, usually a woman, although men held managerial posts, as they did in law, work and education. Mass communications, another rapidly growing field, also provided new jobs. In the 1920s, the number of women editors, reporters, and journalists doubled. But in most competitive fields, women had to fight a rising tide of sexism.

Professional men hoped both to increase their own status and to preserve traditional divisions of spheres; even in the progressive era, few doors opened more crack exceptions in medicine and academic life. Medicine, which had started on a lower status than law or the ministry, rose rapidly. Since 1910, the medical profession had extended its influence, limited its practitioners ("fewer and better doctor came AMA policy), and shut women out. Foundations poured money into professions medical schools while lesser schools closed. As practicing schools have

quotas on women entrants and 90 percent of hospitals refused to appoint women interns, the proportion of doctors who were women began to decline—from 6 percent in 1910 to 5 percent in 1920 and 4.4 percent in 1930. And as the profession itself grew smaller, the number of women physicians dropped by a third. Medical relief was not caused by feminist decline; it had started when the suffrage movement was at its peak. Still, as Alice Hamilton pointed out in the 1920s, it was easier for women physicians when they could "count on the loyalty" of devoted feminists who would choose a doctor because she was a woman.

While medicine shrank, higher education expanded. In academic life, slower to curtail female presence, women capitalized briefly on progressive gains. Since 1910, the proportion of doctorates earned by women rose—from 10 percent that year to 15.1 percent in 1920 to 15.4 percent in 1930. The proportion of women in college teaching faculties rose too—from 18.9 percent in 1910 to 30.1 percent in 1920 to 32.5 percent in 1930. Clearly, women's advances had been most substantial in the decade 1910 to 1920, when the feminist movement gained momentum. "I find myself wondering whether our generation was not the only generation of women which ever found itself," wrote Marjorie Nicolson, a college graduate in 1914 and much later Columbia's first tenured woman professor. "We came late enough to escape the self-consciousness and belligerence of the pioneers, to take education and training for granted. We came early enough to take equally for granted professional positions in which we could make full use of our training." Here too the tide began to turn around 1920, when the proportion of women graduate students started to decline, in part a response to universities' tightened quotas. But in the 1920s, when women earned one-third of all graduate degrees, their numbers constantly rose. Significantly, many academic women of the decade made their mark in the behavioral sciences, fields to which progressive era women had been attracted.

Some of these anthropologists, psychologists, and social scientists were linked to pioneers of earlier generations, just as they became involved in the careers of women scholars of the next one. Social scientist Katherine Bement Davis, whose survey of sexual attitudes was published in the 1920s, had once studied with Marion Talbot at the University of Chicago. In the prewar era she supervised the work of such Chicago graduate students as psychologist Jessie Taft, who became a leading figure in child welfare and social work education. Ruth Benedict began work in anthropology at the New School in 1919 with ethnologist Elsie Clews Parsons. In the 1920s, as a lecturer at Columbia, Benedict helped inspire a new generation of graduate students, including Margaret Mead. Historian Rosalind Rosenberg has shown that these women scholars were part of a special tradition in social science that began in the 1890s. Encouraged and supported by a coterie of prominent academic men, from John Dewey to Franz Boas, they questioned traditional assumptions about sex differences, stressed the impact of cultural conditioning, and "formulated theories about intelligence, personality development and sex roles that . . . affected the whole course of American social science."

As social scientists, women scholars often saw themselves as participants in two cultures—a male culture of academic research and scientific rigor, and women's culture; as women, indeed, they were often relegated to the very periphery of academic life. But their vocations held great allure. New behavioral scientists described their

choice of field as a way to resolve quandaries about their roles or to under women's place in society. For psychologist Phyllis Blanchard, a student of G. S. Hall, "the necessity of solving my own problems developed into a desire to understand all problems, and I turned to the social sciences." For Ruth Benedict, the pline itself provided a mode of accommodation to her culture. Dissatisfied with conventional role limitations but unable to discard expected patterns of behavior, Benedict found in anthropology a reconciliation between scientific and human inclinations, a resolution of what she viewed as a male/female dichotomy. Psychologist Lorine Pruette, another Hall student, found a different kind of accommodation through her career. "In general," she wrote, "all my old feminist revolt has transferred from men to the condition of human existence."

Young anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston, a leading figure in the 1920s H Renaissance, was more involved in black culture than in women's culture. In 1919 a Boas graduate student at Columbia, she embarked on a field trip to southern Florida to collect black folklore, a project intended to invalidate racial stereotypes. Her novels, Hurston dealt with the intersection of race and gender, as did other authors of the Harlem Renaissance, such as Jessie Fauset and Nella Larsen. Another Boas student, Ella Deloria, a Dakota Sioux, used her skill at ethnography to create Sioux narratives, which she began to publish in the 1930s. In a novel written in 1940s, Deloria sought to convey a woman's perspective of Sioux life in the nineteenth century. Yet another Boas student at Columbia, Margaret Mead, was, like her colleagues, informed by a feminist consciousness. In 1925 she persuaded Boas to support plans for field work outside North America, despite the objections of prominent in the field who thought her sex a handicap. "Margaret's mother passed on to her ideal of women's rights, and in the difficult process of persuading her father to let her go to college she learned who the 'enemy' was," Mead's first husband, anthropologist Luther Cressman, recalled a half-century later. "She had the firm conviction that could establish and hold her place in the profession with men." A similar conviction inspired other ambitious young women of Mead's generation. But, as women sought careers in competitive fields, they had to confront a new array of problems.

The loss of a cohesive woman's movement-deprived professionals of a ready body of support. Professional situations were competitive, not cooperative; as career women were more likely to join professional societies than women's social groups to strive for advancement rather than pave the way for others. "As soon as a woman has it for herself," Anna Howard Shaw told Emily Blair, "she will have entered man's world and cease to fight as a woman for other women." Professional status was also apt to require accommodation more than militancy. "Any weakness is to be considered feminine," warned Elizabeth Kemper Adams in a 1921 study of professional women. The woman professional, Adams explained, worked not for profit but out of "intellectual and moral devotion." Still, she could expect to be judged more rigorously than a man and to "breathe an atmosphere of being on edge." In addition, the professional woman of the 1920s often tried to combine career and marriage, a novel, modern goal.

The married career woman represented a shift from the progressive era, when marriage and career had been viewed as mutually exclusive. Since 1910, the proportion of professional women who married had steadily increased—from 12.2 per-

in 1910 to 19.3 percent in 1920 to 24.7 percent in 1930. In the 1920s, even the proportion of teachers who married doubled, despite the refusal of most school boards to hire married women. The new trend reflected not only the rapid increase of college-educated women and the rising rate of marriage among them but a shift in goals. The modern young woman as Dorothy Dunbar Bromley explained in her *Harper's* article, "Feminist—New Style," in 1927, believed that "a full life calls for marriage and children as well as a career." Freda Kirchwey, who edited the *Nation's* series on "modern women" claimed that the New Woman of the 1920s was "not altogether satisfied with love, marriage, and a purely domestic career." A Barnard graduate, former suffragist, and active supporter of birth control, Kirchwey enumerated the New Woman's goals. "She wants money of her own. She wants work of her own. She wants some means of self-expression, perhaps, some way of satisfying her personal ambition. But she wants a home, husband, and children, too."

The problem of fusing marriage and career emerged as a theme in the *Nation* essays, whose authors, all working professionals, were mainly married—although few had children. "Marriage is too much of a compromise," wrote Sue Shelton White, NWP leader, lawyer, and Democratic politician. "It lops off a woman's life as an individual." But renouncing marriage was also a "lopping off," White wrote. "We choose between the Frying Pan and the Fire." Psychologist Phyllis Blanchard described a long struggle "between my own two greatest needs—the need for love and the need for independence." At first unable to reconcile the two or to abandon her "desire for personal autonomy," she eventually found, in marriage at 30, both "love and freedom, which once seemed to me such incompatible bedfellows." But the *Nation* essayists' desire for autonomy and their low rate of childbearing did not impress the experts whose critiques were appended to the series of articles. Only Beatrice Hinkle, psychoanalyst and feminist, commended their struggles with "convention and inertia" and felt they signified "the birth of a new woman."

Reconciling marriage and career called for further measures. Another goal was to reshape the home to suit women's needs, along the lines suggested by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. A pioneer attempt had been made in 1915 by Greenwich Village feminist Henrietta Rodman. Rodman planned an apartment house with communal nursery, cooking, laundry, and housework, to free married women for productive work. A decade later, Smith College opened an Institute for Coordination of Women's Interests, directed by Ellen Puffer Howe, another *Nation* essayist. Its purpose was to resolve the "intolerable choice between career and home," to integrate family life with women's "continuous intellectual interest," and to provide models for combining marriage and career—through cooperative nursery, kitchen, laundry, and shopping arrangements. Neither project succeeded; Rodman's building was never built, and the Smith institute lasted only six years. But both were attempts to adjust the home to accommodate women, rather than the reverse.

Some feminists of the 1920s went even further by advocating a readjustment of the workplace, economy, and society. The Smith attempt to "modernize" the home was only a "temporary expedient," wrote Alice Beal Parsons in *Women's Dilemma* (1926). Parsons proposed part-time jobs, payments to mothers for child care, crèches (infant care centers), and day-care centers run by professionals. Suzanne LaFollette, similarly critical of the Smith institute, contended that sexual equality

required "profound psychic and material readjustment" so that women could be equal participants in the economy. LaFollette insisted that woman was primarily individual, not a wife or a mother. She denied "the assumption that marriage special concern of woman" or "that marriage and motherhood constitute her life and her other interests are extra-normal." Individualism, as LaFollette defined it, had a vocal, optimistic coterie of support, though primarily middle-class and African American and ethnic working women often had other priorities.

MIGRANTS AND IMMIGRANTS

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, about two million Americans left the South and the number of blacks in the North rose three over. Some 454,000 blacks moved north or west between 1910 and 1920, and 74 in the 1920s. Unlike earlier waves of black migrants, newcomers in the World War era came from the deep South and a greater proportion moved to the Midwest. In 1920, the nation's largest black communities were in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago. A combination of perils spurred the exodus: sharecropping, crop failure, disfranchisement, and Jim Crow laws urged migrants out of the South. Employment opportunities, especially in wartime, brought them north. So did the desire for personal liberty. "The lure of high wages and a freer life proved irresistible to a people limited to agriculture and domestic service," observes historian Jacqueline Jones. Still, migration meant facing difficult circumstances—a discriminatory job market, run-down housing, and increasingly segregated neighborhoods.

Black women migrants of the early twentieth century, who tended to be younger and better educated than those left behind, eagerly sought factory jobs. "I'll work in nobody's kitchen but my own," a box factory worker in Chicago declared in 1920. By 1920, a small proportion of black women wage-earners in urban areas moved away from domestic work to industrial work or other service jobs, such as operating elevators. But in industry, as Jones shows, black women were a reserve force. If employed in manufacturing, typically when the supply of new immigrants diminished or became unavailable, they usually worked in menial or undesirable jobs—as hog killers in meatpacking plants, or in commercial laundries, or as seamstresses. The new opportunities of the 1920s, in clerical and sales work, remained closed to black women, who, if hired at all, worked in store basements or rooms. Domestic labor was frequently the only option, even for the educated. In 1920s, almost three out of four employed black women were domestic servants in laundresses. After World War I, black women constituted one-fifth of domestic workers in New York City and Chicago, one-half in Philadelphia, and 90 percent in Pittsburgh. Black workers of the 1920s changed the nature of domestic work by refusing to "in" and by taking only "day work," which insured more autonomy. City life in 1920s, finally, offered a small group of black women work in commercial entertainment—as dancers, performers, hostesses, and waitresses in cabarets. Harlem's "Cotton Club," patronized by downtown whites, featured a chorus line of light-skinned young women, billed as "tall, tan, and terrific." Another Harlem "The Brown Skin Models Review" catered to an African American audience.



The great migration of the World War I era brought thousands of African Americans from the rural South to northern and western cities. Above, a black family arrives in Chicago in 1916. (*Schomburg Library*)

Imbalanced sex ratios in northern cities limited marriage options: except during war, women were a majority of black migrants. In New York City in the mid-1920s, there were about 85 men to every 100 women; nearly three out of ten black women lived alone or as lodgers. Some cities, like Chicago, attracted single women, Jacqueline Jones notes. Others, such as Pittsburgh or Detroit, which offered men industrial jobs, drew larger proportions of families. Among black urban families, a high proportion of wives worked for wages. In Detroit, one out of four black married women worked outside the home, and in New York, 46.4 percent. Overall, however, young women 16-24 remained the largest contingent of black women workers. Black women's branches of the Young Women's Christian Association, founded in major cities since the 1890s, focused on the needs of young working women, especially migrants who came to the city alone. New York's black YWCA, founded in 1905, moved to Harlem in 1913, became a fulcrum of activism in World War I, and increased its range in the 1920s. Future lawyer and minister Pauli Murray, then a

college student from Durham, North Carolina, remembered the summer of 1917 when she worked as a part-time switchboard operator at the YWCAs residence 137th Street, as "a heady experience for an eighteen-year old." To Murray women staffers at the Y were "role models in the pursuit of excellence."

The surge of black migration broadened the options of middle-class American women, who pursued racial uplift through work with the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), the YWCA, or politicized groups like NAACP or the Urban League. Heavy black migration, historian Evelyn Higginbotham points out, also increased black women's role in electoral politics. "The conflation of woman's suffrage and black urban migration made possible greater political opportunity and leverage for blacks as a group," she writes. "The NACW, which had led the suffrage cause among black women, 'became a springboard for future political work.'" Through NACW clubs in 41 states women leaders of the 1920s mobilized support for the Republican party, with the African American community had been allied since Reconstruction, and especially hard for the election of Calvin Coolidge in 1924. "How little have we realized in our club work for the last twenty-five years that it was God's way of preparing us to assume this greater task of citizenship," an activist declared. By 1931 depression took hold, the affinity between black women and the Republican party waned, Higginbotham notes, and by the election of 1936 it had ended. The allegiance to the Democratic party among black leaders such as Mary Mc Bethune, prominent educator and women's club leader, "symbolized the climate of the black electorate."

Mexican population movement to the United States, growing since the 1890s, reached new highs in the 1920s. After revolution in Mexico in 1910, which created violence, economic distress, and political disorder, migration increased. Spread of commercial farming in the Southwest, meanwhile, increased employment demand for cheap labor. More than a million Mexicans, about 10 percent of Mexico's population, entered the United States between 1910 and 1930. At the end of the 1920s, almost two-thirds of foreign-born Mexicans in the U.S. had entered since 1915. The Mexican population of Los Angeles more than tripled in the 1920s. The numbers of Mexicans in Texas cities like San Antonio rose by half or more, and Mexican communities mushroomed in the Midwest, especially in Chicago and Detroit. But the concentration remained southwestern; in 1930, 80 percent of Mexican American population lived in Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado. Migration from Mexico occurred mainly in family groups. Meritless outnumbers women as migrants, often arrived first, and later sent for families. Some single women, however, migrated alone. Mexican immigrant women of the 1920s experienced a tension "between role expectations of Mexican women and their new American circumstances," historian Karen Anderson writes. "Low wages meant they had to assume responsibility for family support, yet cultural norms prescribed a domestic and familial role for women." Mexican women, short, had to confront not only "a hostile Anglo world and an exploitative economy," but, in addition, "their problematical gender status within their own larger culture."

Mexican migrant women of the 1920s had limited employment options. Most worked in agricultural labor, as pickers of beets, onions, or cotton. Others held domestic jobs or found work in the garment industry or in food processing; these jobs were labor-intensive, seasonal, insecure, and low-paid. But employer demand remained high. Employers encouraged the migration of families, with many working members, to secure a tractable labor force that could survive on low wages. When families labored together in field work or food processing, the head of the family was paid; women earned less than men and lacked leverage as family members and workers. The family, Anderson notes, served as both a "buffer against the vicissitudes of American life" and a curb on autonomy. At the end of the 1920s, among Mexican American women workers, 38 percent held service jobs, 25 percent blue-collar jobs, and 21 percent agricultural jobs; 3 percent worked in clerical or sales jobs; and 3 percent were professionals.

California reformers and social workers of the 1920s targeted Mexican American women through "Americanization" programs that sought to change their cultural values and promote conformity to American ways. When homemakers proved resistant to Americanization, historian George J. Sanchez shows, reformers refocused their efforts on daughters, who, in the tradition of immigrant daughters elsewhere, strove to emancipate themselves. "The freedom and independence in this country bring the children into conflict with their parents," one Mexican mother told a UCLA sociologist. "They learn nicer ways, learn about the outside world, learn how to speak English, and then they become ashamed of their parents who brought them here that they might have better advantages." Young women adapted most readily to the American market economy and to American culture, specifically, consumer culture. In Mexican communities, historian Vicki L. Ruiz points out, the ethic of consumption reached immigrants through English-language and Spanish-language publications. The Los Angeles-based publication, *La Opinion*, for instance, started in 1926, offered advice columns, celebrity gossip, advertisements for clothes and cosmetics, and tips on behavior, such as the 1927 article titled "How Do You Kiss?" Teenagers shared "cultural messages they gleaned from English and Spanish-language publications, afternoon matinees, and popular radio programs," including the desire to "date." A handful of Latina actresses, such as Dolores Del Rio and Lupe Vélez, served as role models of the American dream. Consumer culture especially affected young women factory workers, who, overworked and underpaid, strove to control their leisure time. As the ethic of consumption encroached, young women's earning power, small as it was, could be a "bargaining chip." Consumerism, according to Ruiz, challenged the ideology of control that Mexican families exerted over daughters.

For European immigrants of the progressive years and especially for their daughters, the postwar decade was an era of acculturation. The National Origins Act of 1924 curtailed the flow of immigrants, especially those from southern and eastern Europe who had dominated the ranks of newcomers since the 1880s. Curbs on immigration and changes in the labor market affected women's employment. As state laws gradually barred child labor, the number of working wives in immigrant families rose, especially after World War I. More markedly, daughters of European

immigrants moved upward into white-collar work and women's professions. Many they abandoned factory work for jobs in department stores and offices. Even betw 1910 and 1920, according to historian Donna Gabaccia, the number of foreign-born sales clerks had increased by more than 200 percent and of foreign-born typists 100 percent. Commercial high school and business colleges prepared immigrant daughters for English-speaking jobs; daughters of artisans, skilled workers, and ows, Gabaccia notes, sought training for office work with special frequency. S daughters of immigrant families became professionals, too. By the early 19 Jewish women constituted almost half of New York City teachers.

The ethic of consumption affected women of new immigrant background grew up exposed to the American marketplace. In the 1920s, many immigrant families sought middle-class status. Some women used volunteerism as a stepping-st and devoted time to women's ethnic organizations. Many relied on American women's publications for clues to genteel manners and values. Author Philip F remembers how his mother, Bess Finkel, the first-generation offspring of poor migrants from eastern Europe, a high school graduate of 1922, and a former secretary, was, as a New Jersey housewife, faithful to women's magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Redbook*, and the *Women's Home Companion*. "In their pages, confirmed her sense of how to dress and to furnish a home, found the recipes that clipped and filed in her recipe box, and received instruction in the current con tions of child-rearing and marriage." Possessions, too, played a role in acculturat Immigrant housewives, Donna Gabaccia notes, "quickly became avid consumer American products." According to historian Jenna Weissman Joselit, among Jewish immigrant women, "shopping became a tangible instrument of integration Americanization." More radical spirits mocked the corrupting influence of c sumption, but without impact. The marketplace, in short, "became an effect "Americanizer."

The marketplace of the 1920s had special salience for the young. Since the 1920s, as historian Kathy Peiss reveals, young working women of urban migrant communities had learned how to spend money on themselves and to er their leisure time. In the 1920s, as mass culture—radio, movies, advertisements, popular press—gained ground, these trends became more widespread. For second-generation young women, education, employment, and mass culture served as a of Americanizing influences. These influences spurred generational conflict, and the second generation matured, divisions peaked. The individualism of American society, for instance, challenged the family-centered culture of southern Europe; Donna Gabaccia observes, especially as the second generation dressed and beha in American ways. The messages of mass culture, however, were at once liberal and conservative: overall, they fostered domestic ideals. Young women of immigrant families "committed themselves almost universally to marriage, motherhood and American-style domesticity," Gabaccia contends. "The daughters of the pre-World War I migrations pioneered in creating domesticity as a female right rather than a class privilege." Mass culture of the 1920s also brought exposure to the "new morality," the upshot of a long-term change in sexual attitudes behavior.

THE NEW MORALITY

The sexual revolution of the early twentieth century was not an overnight change but rather an evolutionary change in attitudes and practices that had been building since at least the 1890s. Its hallmarks were a positive view of human sexuality, acceptance of female sexuality, freedom in the discussion of sexual issues, looser moral standards, and new norms of sexual behavior. Shifts in all areas were well underway before the 1920s; some symptoms of change can be traced back to the last third of the nineteenth century. By the pre-World War I period, middle-class mores were in transition. The flapper had made her first appearance; dance crazes caught popular attention; the press mentioned sexual issues such as venereal disease and prostitution; and readers besieged popular columnists with questions about the behavior of well-bred daughters. Beatrice Fairfax responded, with regret, that "Making love lightly, boldly, and promiscuously seems to be part of our social structure." ("Making love," in this context, meant some form of affectionate display, or what came to be labeled petting.) Dorothy Dix observed in 1913 that "the social position of women has been revolutionized since mother was a girl."

But changing sexual attitudes had greatest impact in the 1920s. Before the war, liberated behavior, notably among young women, was regarded as a hazard. In the 1920s, while still controversial, the same behavior became a given rather than an omen. In the prewar era, sexual emancipation had had a narrow base of urban sophisticateds. In the 1920s, it became a national concern, dividing the generations in small-town America as well as in the metropolis. In the prewar era, sexual revolutionaries such as Margaret Sanger and her Greenwich Village cohort were usually affiliated with the left. Their rebellion was fueled by political fervor and linked to rejection of all middle-class values. After World War I, the new mood of sexual emancipation veered off from its radical origins and became itself a middle-class attribute. The new morality now received a label. Defended by enthusiasts, celebrated in the media, and immortalized by youth, it was absorbed into popular culture.

The ideology of sexual revolution arrived full force in the prewar era, with the writings of Sigmund Freud, Ellen Key, and Havelock Ellis, but it had at that time a limited audience, such as the radical New York vanguard. By the 1920s, "sexual enthusiasm," once a left-wing perquisite, had permeated the mainstream. Freud stressed the centrality of sex in human experience; his popularizers in the 1920s stressed the hazards of sexual repression. The "id" and "libido" became a part of common lingo. Key advocated free sexual expression for women, including "free motherhood" (without marriage). "The most sacred thing in life is individual desire," she wrote, "with special emphasis on sex-desire." Key contended, too, that every woman should set aside a decade for having three or four children. Havelock Ellis's philosophy received wide attention at Margaret Sanger's instigation in the 1920s. Ellis had long been a herald of female sexuality. In 1905, he had proclaimed that the "sexual impulse in women" existed apart from the "reproductive instinct." Presenting sexuality as ennobling, not destructive, and "restraint" as more dangerous than "excess," Ellis had urged a new morality based on greater freedom and self-expression.

In the 1920s, the ideology of sexual emancipation helped to sweep away old rules and introduce new ones. Now, sex was central to life, repression damaging to health

and psyche. Lending support to changes in attitudes and practices already under the new morality legitimized a role reversal for women. Men had always been summed to have sexual natures, even if "restraint" had once been thought preferable "indulgence." But the new morality proclaimed equality of desire. Discarding p for sexuality, women could now claim a facet of male privilege. "The myth of the woman is almost at an end," one enthusiast, V. F. Calverton, proclaimed in 1914. "Women's demands for equal rights have extended to the sexual sphere as well as social." Equal rights in the sexual sphere remained as elusive as they were undeliverable. Nonetheless, two important, overlapping types of sexual revolution occurred: various points after 1910, both based on shifting attitudes toward female sexuality. One was a sexual revolution within middle-class marriage. Indeed, middle-class married women were the unsung sexual revolutionaries of the early twentieth century. This gradual revolution had long-term repercussions, starting in the 1910s when marriage was redefined as a sexual institution. The other sexual revolution was the new behavior of "youth," especially of middle-class daughters. The revolutionary youth took the form of revamped courtship customs, a modest but significant increase in premarital affairs, and a far larger increase in premarital sexual contact. Youthful rebellion affected the older generation, first, because it was widely publicized (as the revolution within marriage was not) and second, because youth, brief, and the young, single generation that seemed to dominate the decade quickly became an older, married one.

A major symptom of change in the 1920s was that middle-class women adopted a positive view of sexuality; this change had been in progress over the first decades of the century. Its impact was revealed in 1929 when Katherine Ben Davis published her pioneer sexual survey. Carried out in 1918, Davis's survey reflected the responses of 2,200 middle-class women, married and unmarried, married college graduates, whose names came from women's club membership rolls and alumnae files—indeed, it was quite an elite, upper-crust sample. Undertaken to further the cause of social hygiene and the social purity movement, the survey ultimately served another purpose: to document the importance of sexual experience to women's lives. The Davis survey actually caught women at an important premarital juncture in the shift of sexual attitudes and practices. More than half of the unmarried women, for instance, and three out of ten of the married women, had intimate emotional relationships with women. One out of five respondents had homosexual experiences, though few had premarital heterosexual relations. This aspect of the survey reflected the old morality. The married women Davis surveyed, however, most of whom used contraceptives, described sexual relations in positive, receptive terms—"as an expression of love," "because it is a natural, normal relation," pleasure, satisfaction, development," "for mental and physical health." As the average respondent was born around 1880, the Davis survey suggested that change in middle-class women's attitudes toward sexual experience were well underway by the 1920s. Moreover, Davis was forced to conclude (contrary to her expectations) that frequency of intercourse could not be correlated with poor health or sterility, thereby supporting the sexual revolution within marriage.

Katherine Bement Davis's study, the first national survey of its type and the most comprehensive until the Kinsey report, was significant in another way, too. For

sexual surveys were usually carried out among prostitutes and delinquents to analyze "deviance." Davis was herself trained in such research. Only in the 1920s did researchers turn their attention to what was "normal." While Davis was interested in all facets of female sexual life, as well as in women's attitudes toward sexual experience (her respondents provided reams of commentary), most researchers were bent on tabulating loss of purity. Rising rates of (middle-class) premarital and extramarital intercourse were seen as the hallmark of sexual revolution, and surveys and studies of the 1920s and 1930s pointed to the decade after 1910 as a watershed of moral change. Later, using broader samples that more accurately measured the repercussions of changing mores (beyond the urban middle-class), Kinsey found that twice as many women born after 1900 had premarital experience as those born before 1900, putting the brunt of change in the 1920s. The gist of the research, during the 1920s and after, was that around the time suffrage was won, traditional morality had started to crack. Using premarital sex as a touchstone, male and female "morals" were starting to become more alike. The "single standard" of morality had materialized, said Beatrice Hinkle, and it was "nearer the standard associated with men."

The death of the double standard was wildly exaggerated. But even shifts toward a single standard bewildered women who had grown up with the old morality. "We were reared, educated, and married for one sort of life, and precipitated before we had a chance to get our bearings into another," Frances Woodward Prentiss wrote in *Scribners*. "Perhaps we cannot take sex as lightly as the young: nor as calmly as the old." Nor were women who defended the new morality unaware of its liabilities. "Far more will be expected of sex when it is left free to express itself than under any repressive system," Elsie Clews Parsons had predicted in 1914. The interest of the 1920s, however, was neither in the reaction of women past youth nor in the rising expectations Parsons anticipated. Rather, it was in the newly emancipated young, especially young women, who seemed to be the prime movers in moral change.

To some observers, the sexual emancipation of young women was linked to economic independence. "In the great cities . . . where women can control their own purse strings, many of them are able to drift into casual or steady relationships which may or may not end in marriage," Alyse Gregory wrote in *Current History* in 1923. "The self-supporting young woman 'has her own salary at the end of the month and asks no other recompense from her lover but his love and companionship.'" Other observers agreed that once young women supported themselves, they were likely to develop behavior patterns more like those of men. The liberation of the young working woman had been in progress in urban areas for several decades. Self-consciously "modern" middle-class women of the 1920s began to adopt the lifestyle developed by working-class women around the turn of the century. But neither economic independence nor the emancipation of city life were seen as the main spurs of the new morality of the 1920s. "Youth" as a whole, even youth supported by their parents, seemed to be shifting moral gears, as reflected in endless articles with such titles as "These Wild Young People" and "The Uprising of Youth."

The phenomenon evoked alarm, concern, and, among its best-known analysts, acclaim. Enthusiasts were notably middle-aged men. One, for example, was Denver judge Ben Lindsey, who, at 54, defended *The Revolt of Modern Youth* in 1925. Youth of the decade had been transformed, Lindsey wrote, by the modern environment—by its

economy and culture, by science and technology; by the car, movies, and radio; at the very speed of change. The world of the young was so different from that of parents that old morals and standards had no significance. "Youth has always been rebellious; youth has always shocked the older generation," Lindsey said. "But this is different. It has the whole weight and momentum of a new scientific and economic behind it. . . . These boys and girls can do what boys and girls were never able to do in the past." Lindsey was referring mainly to "tentative excursions into sex experience and 'sexual liberties,' although he pegged the premarital sexual intercourse rate at between 15 and 20 percent. Emancipated behavior, he felt, was preferable to out values, 'the ragtag and bobtail of adult puritanism.' Especially commendable was modern young woman, 'who makes her own living, votes, holds her own in competition with men [and] is capable of doing things her mother couldn't come within of.'" To defenders of the new morality, suffrage, self-support, self-assertion, and sexual emancipation were linked together in a modern package.

To traditionalists, the rebellion of youth was a danger signal, and on this feminists aligned with the traditionalists. Veterans of the last generation such as Addams objected to the "astounding emphasis upon sex," and Charlotte Perkins Gilman opened fire on "selfish and fruitless indulgence." "It is sickening to see many of the newly freed abusing that freedom in a mere imitation of masculine weakness and vice," she wrote in *Century Magazine* in 1923. Gilman was repelled by young women who gave way to "appetite and impulse," who adopted "a coarseness looseness in speech, dress, manners, and habits of life," and who, instead of preparing for motherhood, were "enjoying preliminaries" or even "mastering birth control and acquiring experience." Clearly, progressive era feminism and sexual emancipation did not necessarily lead in the same direction; rather, they seemed at cross purposes. Gilman made a political as well as a personal critique. As historian Li Gordon points out, feminist suspicions of sexual permissiveness were well-founded. Assertion of female sexuality did not of itself raise woman's status, nor did the legitimacy of "indulgence" ensure women freedom, independence, or power. Rather, women had lost bargaining power, or the right of refusal, a crucial weapon in nineteenth-century sexual politics.

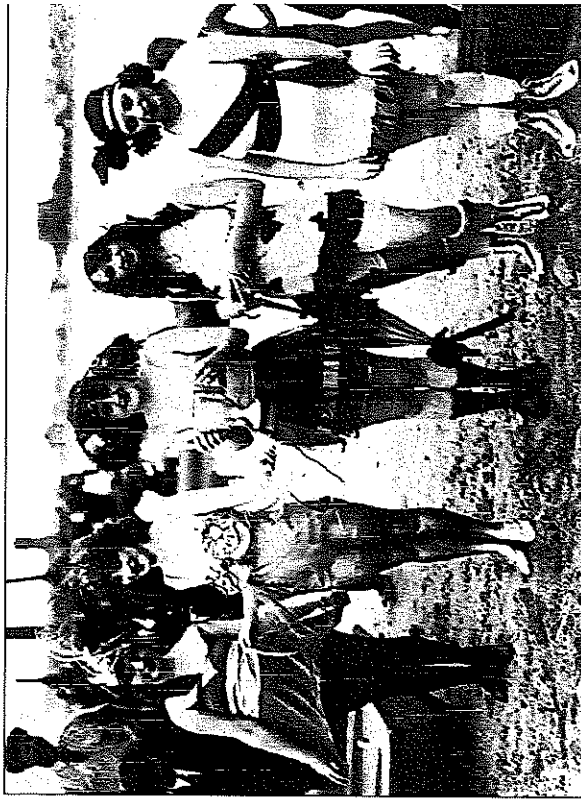
Traditionalists, however, including the older generation of feminists, lost ground in the 1920s. Not only did the new morality enjoy extensive publicity, but its emblem was the young woman, customarily one of society's most powerless and influential members. Now, significantly, she became a cultural symbol. From the set, she was anonymous. "This nameless one, the American flapper," H. L. Menck had labeled her in 1915. Urban and upper middle class, the prewar flapper had little superficial sophistication. She had "forgotten how to simmer," Mencken wrote. "Seldom blushes; it is impossible to shock her." She opposed the double standard, favored a law prohibiting it, and planned to read Havelock Ellis over the summer. Columnist Dorothy Dix confirmed that the prewar flapper was "a girl in good position in society" and defined her by her energy, spunk, and sportive esprit. She could "play golf all day, drive a car, offer first aid, and . . . is in no more danger of swooning than a man would be." Before the war, there was a certain looseness in flapper definition. After, the role became a mold, a style, a stereotype. "The flapper of fiction, plays, movies, and newspapers," said the *New Republic* in 1922, "offers a vivid pat-

of modern young life and creates a certain bravado . . . the necessity for living up to current opinion."

The flapper of the 1920s, still distinguished by youth and class, was at once "boyish" and provocative. In dress, habits, and mannerisms, she assumed a dual role. On the one hand, she was a temptress, an aspect emphasized in movie stars who exuded sexual power and appeal, whether Gloria Swanson's upper-class heroines or Clara Bow's lingerie salesgirl in *It* (1927). On the other hand, the 1920s flapper was a pal and a sport, a challenger and competitor. This facet was revealed in other heroines of the decade such as Amelia Earhart and Gertrude Eberle, who broke boundaries and set records. In both cases, the flapper was characterized by assertion and defiance—of rules, traditions, and conventions, although defiance itself became a convention. Winning contests or smoking in public, she claimed privileges reserved for men, including that of sexuality. According to the tabloids, she might even assume the role of sexual aggressor, as demonstrated by 16-year-old Peaches Browning, who ensnared her millionaire sugar daddy. The heroine of *Flaming Youth* (1923), a sensational best-seller soon made into a movie, was equally aggressive. Willful and capricious, this "dangerously inflammable" 18-year-old seduces a friend of the family, a married man of 40, who at last discards his wife to reward her efforts—with marriage. A new type of heroine, the fictional flapper had novel tactics but traditional goals.

The flapper was a vital economic symbol too. She was defined by the goods and services she was able to buy, whether silk stockings, bobbed hair, jazz records, or rouge compacts. Her attributes symbolized, at once, freedom, availability, and purchasing power. Clothes, the great liberator of the decade, were her major hallmark. While the styles of the 1890s had enabled women to ride bicycles and work in offices, the flapper's clothes advertised both equality and sexuality. The ready-made women's clothing industry of the 1920s began to surpass "cloakmaking" as the mainstay of the garment trade. The flapper's cigarette was also a loaded symbol. It proclaimed equality with men, who conventionally smoked in public, while conveying an aura of suggestion and bravado. Between 1918 and 1928, production of cigarettes more than doubled. By the end of the decade, cigarette ads showed women, sometimes movie starlets, smoking or having their cigarettes lit by men. Cosmetics were another suggestive accoutrement. A generation earlier, makeup was associated mainly with prostitutes. It now conveyed the intent to be provocative. By 1929, the flapper could choose from a grand array of cosmetics, another multimillion-dollar business. Temptress and challenger, she was also a consumer, an advertisement for the clothing, tobacco, and beauty products industries.

Finally, the flapper was a great competitor. Her styles and affectations represented not only new freedoms—to wear, to do, to buy—but also new criteria for success. "Youth in this day and age," wrote sociologist Ernest Burgess, "are rated in terms of sex appeal," and the flapper sought a high score. Sometimes she competed with men, though only in a pallid, sportive, companionate way. More often, flappers competed with one another, and not only in dance contests and beauty pageants. Even Dorothy Dunbar Bromley's "feminist—new style" did not identify with other women or profess any "loyalty to women en masse." Rather, she was "a good dresser, a good sport, a good pal," who dealt with men on a basis of "frank comradeship." Dropping "sex-antagonism," she also discarded older traditions of female friendship,



Since the late nineteenth century, carnivals and mass circulation newspapers had used beauty contests as publicity devices, but the formal beach beauty contest came to characterize the 1920s. Like the winner and runners-up in this California contest in 1920, contestants were valued for their natural, unsophisticated qualities. They also personified the spirit of exhibitionism, competition, and novelty so prized in the flapper. Beginning in 1921, the Miss America contest in Atlantic City made the beauty contest a national ritual. (UPI/Bettmann)

opportunities for same-sex relationships among women decreased, a change that not escape notice. During the 1920s, men and women, husbands and wives, became "more than before . . . friends," wrote Floyd Dell, editor of the *Massees*, the vanguard magazine read by modern radical urbanites in the prewar era. "At the same time intensity of friendship between people of the same sex seems to be diminishing romance was eroticized, the intense friendships between women that had characterized the Victorian era appeared to fade.

What happened to same-sex relationships in the 1920s? Again, the current change flowed both ways, for as historian Lillian Faderman points out, elements of liberation and repression coexisted. New York sophisticates, for instance, attended drag balls as spectators; Greenwich Village bohemians, who embraced the unconventional, defended homosexuality and experimented with bisexuality; a working-class lesbian subculture began to evolve in big cities. Concurrently, among middle-class Americans, the pendulum swung in another direction. As sex became a legitimate, same-sex relationships became less so. Once love between women was seen as sexual, such relationships no longer seemed harmless, but rather a barrier to heterosexual happiness. With its promise of sexual equality, the new mi-

The young woman growing up in the 1920s was more likely to be influenced by national culture, by the media, and by her peers. Two particular influences, the campus and the movies, helped her to fuse the new morality with traditional roles.

"PALS" AND "PARTNERS"

In the 1920s, for the first time, more than half of young people were enrolled in some sort of educational institution. The numbers of high school and college students surged upward. By 1930, more than half of Americans of high school age attended high school, 12 percent of the college-aged went to colleges and universities, and many others were at "junior colleges" and teacher-training schools. Although the proportion of women in the college population declined slightly during the decade, from a high of 47.3 percent in 1920 to 43.7 percent in 1930, women flocked to college at almost the same rate as men. The pacesetter college woman of the 1920s was not the student at an elite woman's college, as had been the case in the 1880s and 1890s, but the coed at a large state college or university. In the college setting, where the authority of peers replaced that once held by parents and community, her role was shaped by the campus itself.

The campus context, as historian Paula Fass explains, provided "informal access" between the sexes. Such access promoted a new sense of equality and also encouraged "pronounced attention to sexual attractiveness." The coed of the 1920s assumed the roles of "pal" and "partner," both defined in terms of her relationship to men. Her dual role rested on the assumption that equality meant assuming the privileges and mannerisms once monopolized by men. It carried an aura of experimentation and innovation, adventure and bravado. Men on campus defended such bravado, especially in the pages of college newspapers (men tended to dominate extracurricular activities while women students engineered social events). "The flapper is the girl who is responsible for the advancement of women's condition in the world," announced an Illinois editor in 1922, citing her "independent" and "pally" qualities. The coed was not inferior, claimed an Ohio editor, and therefore did not need special rules and regulations, "as if she were feeble-minded or insane." But there were new rules and regulations on campus, determined by the students themselves. The social rites and rituals that began in the 1920s were extremely important for the coed, whose marital future might well be decided in the campus arena (a "glorified playground" one educator called it). Moreover, college students were innovators and pacesetters. Their customs and manners affected the roles of women attending single-sex colleges, primarily on weekends, when they came in contact with men. Simultaneously, collegiate manners spread to students in high school, and thereby became staples of national youth culture.

"Dating" was a major innovation. Going out on dates was a marked change from the calls paid at home by suitors of an earlier generation, and suggested a more assertive, independent role for middle-class daughters; adult supervision had been banished. The main architects of the dating system, historian John Modell contends, were middle-class girls. They had more to gain, he suggests, because the new version of the double standard that dating put in place "was considerably less restrictive than



Gender roles were of prime concern to coeds of the 1920s. Sorority sisters at the University of Kansas surround the "Most Perfect Man," a title given annually to the coed judged most capable of "dressing and acting like a gentleman." (Bettmann)

the one it replaced." On the other hand, historian Beth Bailey points out, the shifted power *from* women *to* men; courtship no longer took place in the home, male domain, but in the world beyond. The dating phenomenon clearly invites varied interpretations. Still, dating had indisputable influence on women's roles. It provided practice in the paired activities that would later be a way of life—basic training in the roles of "pal" and "partner." Also, the coed who went out on dates four or five times a week had less opportunity for the single-sex fellowship of an earlier day. The system of sisterhood shared by the previous generation now gave way to competition for dates. By the mid-1920s, Bailey explains, dating had almost completely replaced the system of "calling," and in so doing, had transformed American courtship. The system of dating was abetted by the automobile, which replaced the front porch—although it was hardly a "house of prostitution on wheels," as labeled by a juvenile court judge in Middletown (Muncie, Indiana, whose residents were studied in the 1920s by sociologists Helen and Robert Lynd). Still, the car served as a vehicle of liberty, both for campus couples already removed from the authority of home and for small-town couples who, the Lynds reported, could now drive off to the next town.

The custom of dating contributed to a second innovation in social ritual: "petting," another rehearsal for future roles. Like dating, petting was a significant

After the turn of the century, more women married and at younger ages. Even women college graduates, by the 1920s, wed at near the rate of the general female population. This was not a sudden shift but one that had been building, with a turning point around 1910. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, about half the graduates of women's colleges had remained single (coeds were always more likely to marry). By the 1920s, the pattern had changed. Of those who graduated between 1919 and 1923, 80 percent married. In 1923, a survey of Vassar graduates revealed that 90 percent wanted to marry, and an even higher percentage shared that ambition in other schools surveyed.

Younger women were similarly inclined, especially as the decade wore on. When Lorine Pruette surveyed the ambitions of teenage girls in the early 1920s, the results were mixed. Of her sample of young women aged between 15 and 17, 35 percent wanted careers and were willing to give up marriage and family for them. Pruette found their goals unrealistic because they tended to envision glamorous jobs. Even more teenagers wanted to combine career and marriage, perhaps an equally unrealistic goal. By the end of the decade, Blanchard and Manasses found that among young women 18 to 26 years old, few were willing to forgo marriage for a career. Their survey revealed that young women of the 1920s, at least those in their middle-class sample, had fused liberal attitudes with traditional goals. Almost all favored divorce, for instance, if marriage failed; and more than half expected marriage to provide sexual satisfaction even more than economic security. Most important, young women of the 1920s had high expectations tinged with egalitarian hopes. They envisioned marriage as "a perfect consummation of both personalities that would involve all phases of mutual living."

COMPANIONS AND CONSUMERS

In the prewar decade, radical spirits proposed all sorts of marriage reform. Greenwich Village sophisticates often rejected matrimony, along with other middle-class values. Left-wing figures who congregated at Mabel Dodge Luhan's Fifth Avenue salon were influenced by the sexual radicals whose books they read. Havelock Ellis contended that the "artificial restraints of marriage" should be replaced by "natural monogamy." His wife, Edith Ellis, during an American tour of 1914, explained the virtues of "semi-detached" marriage, like her own. Ellen Key, whose tributes to Havelock Ellis were published in the *Birth Control Review*, recommended "free motherhood." The 1920s provided innovative ideas too. In 1927, Judge Lindsey proposed a form of trial marriage, based on contraception. "Companionate marriage" could be easily dissolved at the initiative of either spouse if no children had been born. But marriage was neither discarded nor legally reformed during the 1920s, along with Lindsey's lines or any other. Rather, it was redefined:

The new ideal of marriage in the 1920s was a romantic-sexual union. The role of the wife was that of sexual partner and agreeable companion, an extension of the qualities valued in dating relationships. Contemporaries described the new ideal in

egalitarian terms—compatibility, reciprocity, and mutuality—that reflected woi raised expectations. The New Woman of the 1920s expected more of man Dorothy Dunbar Bromley wrote in 1927. She wanted to be satisfied in her role lover and companion" and expected "more freedom and honesty within the marriage." Elsie Clews Parsons confirmed that women demanded "more of marriage than i days when they had little to expect but marriage." Young middle-class women cording to Blanchard and Manasses, expected to attain through marriage "a richer life." They envisioned "sharing joys and sorrows with a mate who w not merely a protector and provider but an all round companion." Compani qualities were now defined by experts—sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists physicians. Their views appeared in college texts, marriage manuals, advice colu and mass-circulation magazines. Reflecting changes that had already occurre least within the middle class, descriptions of marriage now fused egalitarian l with a new set of prescriptions.

Sexuality was primary to companionate marriage of the 1920s. Sociology explained that women were sexual beings and that marriage was both a rom and sexual institution. Ernest Burgess declared that the "highest personal happ comes from marriage based on romantic love." Ernest Groves and Wi Ogburn, in their textbook on marriage and the family, confirmed that modern rimony was a "fellowship of love." Birth control advocates added their own me to the marriage literature. Physician Ira Wile posited a new criterion for the su of marriage: the sexual satisfaction of the partners. In a text on the family i early 1930s, sociologist and birth control advocate Joseph K. Folsom conte that sex served to "intensify, beautify, and sanctify love." Margaret Sanger, w 1926 published a marriage manual, *Happiness in Marriage*, revealed that marit was elevating, romantic, and pivotal. Both partners must realize "the import of complete fulfillment of love through the expression of sex," Sanger wrote. expression, rightly understood, is the consummation of love, its completion consecration."

Although the literature presented sexual-romantic marriage as a medley of sion, friendship, and equality, the role of "companion" assumed the same an lence it had had in the late eighteenth century. This became clear in the poj press, where companionship, realistically, involved unequal obligations. The res sibility of amiable companionship fell on the wife, who had to keep romance friendship alive. From metropolis to Middletown, women received the same sage: To "keep the thrill in marriage," wives had to maintain a high level of se: peal. They also had to "keep up"—their appearance, interests, and contacts. The cessful wife was no longer primarily industrious or thrifty; rather, she had to be to propose enjoyable joint activities, and to be attractive, agreeable, and avail Even the birth of a child could imperil a marriage. It could drain a woman's en make her less interesting, and sabotage sexual mutuality. (The white fertility which had steadily declined since 1800, plunged in the 1920s.) Other women also a hazard. The married woman needed survival tactics to meet the competi whether from the next generation of flirts and flappers, with access to offices husbands; from family friends, as in *Flaming Youth*; or from married peers. Al

300 movies in the 1920s dealt with the theme of infidelity, and their lessons were obvious. The companionate wife would have to work at it.

Companionate marriage took another toll too, belying the egalitarian rhetoric used to describe it. As Suzanne LaFollette explained in *Concerning Women*, marriage was still a "state" for men, but for women it was a "vocation," a calling. The dictum of the 1920s, contrary to the aspirations of the "feminist—new style," was that marriage was a woman's primary role. Work or career, if she had any, would be confined to the interval, if there was one, between school and marriage. This axiom had a new corollary: Marriage alone could satisfy all needs; outside activities were secondary, if not perilous, to the health of the union. Women had to be willing, as was one Vassar student in a survey of goals, "to pay whatever price the companionship costs." Surveys among college students reflected division of opinion over what companionate marriage meant. One issue was whether wives should work, even in the early (childless) years of marriage. Men rejected the idea; women supported it. The "abyss of disagreement," as one researcher called it, extended to decision-making within marriage. Male students expected their future wives to contribute only to certain types of decisions, those affecting "the family as a whole," while women nurtured more egalitarian expectations. But equality and companionship were not necessarily compatible. Sexual-romantic marriage, according to the surveys, seemed most viable if the wife lacked individual goals or forceful opinions. Companionate potential could best be realized if she was willing to assume a subordinate role, preferably a domestic one.

The lure of domesticity emerged in the press, especially in such mass-circulation magazines as the *Ladies' Home Journal* and *McCall's*. Since 1889, editor Edward Bok had steered the *Journal*, which led the field, to unparalleled success. Sometimes adopting a muckraker role, as in its campaigns against adulterated food and venereal disease, the *Journal* maintained a conservative stance. After opposing woman suffrage, it began the 1920s by condemning jazz and all it represented ("a bolshevik element of license"). In 1923, Bok revealed in his autobiography that he neither liked women nor understood them. Still, the *Journal* and its competitors understood what women at home liked to read, and articulated what historian William H. Chafe calls "an elaborate ideology in favor of home and marriage." Positing the fulfilled homemaker against the unfeminine, sex-deprived career woman, women's magazines urged their readers to renounce careers and strive for "an executive position in the home."

A major part of this position was as purchaser. "Where income permits," wrote Elsie Clews Parsons, "the wife continues to be the consumer." Since 1910 the magazines women read had become heavy with ads for devices that would save time and energy—for cleaners, polishers, refrigerators, sewing machines, washing machines, stoves—and products such as canned soup that would liberate wives from "constant drudgery." In the 1920s, the volume of advertising doubled, the range of household products increased, and the electric appliance industry boomed. Helen and Robert Lynd reported from Middletown that household appliances had invaded middle-class homes and that the physical labor of housework had decreased, although rising standards kept housewives just as busy. (Poorer families also invested in household improvements—such as linoleum and running water.) Some professional women.

like the copywriters at J. Walter Thompson, used the growth of the female market to build careers. Efficiency expert Lillian Gilbreth, a "household engineer," if staid, served as a conduit between the business world and middle-class women. Manufacturers targeted women purchasers. Electrical companies urged women to give up sweeping, buy a vacuum cleaner, and "delegate to electricity all that electricity can do." Time-saving new products, such as electric toasters and irons, necessary to keep up with the social whirl and retain attractiveness. "Time for and Beauty! Time for Books and Plays!" a Middletown laundry advertised. Shopping could even be an enjoyable companionate activity. The cover of the Sears Roebuck catalog of 1927 depicted an attractive, well-dressed young couple, intertwined in a settee, making mail-order selections. While the wife takes the lead in pointer, the attentive, affectionate husband looks on, engrossed. Modernity was related into romance, home and consumption.



The Sears Roebuck catalog cover of 1927, by Norman Rockwell, promoted both the joy of consumerism and the ideal of romantic marriage. The modern, companionate middle-class couple is absorbed in a future of prospective purchases. The leading illustrator of the *Saturday Evening Post* since 1916, Rockwell was able to capture the way a large audience of Americans wish to see themselves.

(Sears, Roebuck and Company)

The final message received by the middle-class wife of the 1920s was the need for adjustment. Women's magazines advised her not to reject femininity but to enjoy it, to approach domesticity with a positive outlook. Articulate feminists waged a counterattack. Suzanne LaFollette, for instance, assaulted the consumer mentality. Influenced by advertising, leisure, and luxury, she claimed, women were living "without ideas, without ideals." Alice Beal Parsons contended that Havelock Ellis had pointed the way to "limitations" not liberation. Sex was not a panacea, she insisted; productive work was preferable to "getting everything out of some man that one can." By 1931, Lorine Pruette, a consistent critic, sounded a note of desperation. Most women, she wrote, led "contingent lives." They preferred "to work through another person and to find their own joys and compensation in the success of another. This is not so self-sacrificing; generally, it appears to be the easier way."

Some psychological advisers of the 1920s also took issue with the glorification of domesticity in the popular press. The "nervous housewife," wrote Abraham Myerson, a prominent neurologist, suffered from an increasing desire "for a more varied life than that afforded . . . by a life of housework." To career-minded feminists, the solution lay in employment, aspiration, and individualism. To Myerson, the cure was "adjustment . . . fortitude . . . patience . . . fidelity to duty," and community activities. Still, he identified a real discrepancy: The "modern" housewife played a pre-modern role. But this was a minority view. Freudianism, parceled out into popular advice, had a double-barreled message for women of the 1920s. One part was that sexual repression was harmful. The other was that it was healthy to adjust to familial roles and domestic vocations.

By providing the latest in science, psychological advisers supported the message of advertisers who displayed the latest in technology. Modern women were to find fulfillment in traditional roles, now enlivened by a sexual dimension. Eschewing maladjustment and neurosis, aspiration and ambition, they were to seek satisfaction in romance, marriage, and sexual expression. Significantly, contraception underlay the new ideal of sexual-romantic marriage. Throughout the decade, birth control changed middle-class moral standards, courtship customs, and marital ideals while these very changes simultaneously made birth control all the more imperative. Contraception had created its own dynamic.

CONTRACEPTIVE POLITICS

The twentieth-century battle for birth control arose in the cauldron of the pre-World War I left, among circles of socialists and anarchists, rebels and radicals. Emma Goldman, for instance, endorsed contraception in her speeches as early as 1910 and even dispensed contraceptive devices. Such actions were illegal; Congress in 1873 had passed the Comstock law, which classified contraceptive information and devices as obscenity and made it illegal to send either through the mail. Another federal law of 1873 barred the importation of contraceptive information or devices, and supportive state laws, which varied from state to state, imposed yet further restrictions on their manufacture, sale, or distribution. Birth controllers sought to change

the law, and to make contraception available to women, especially working women, who had least access to it.

In the context of the left, Margaret Sanger sought a leadership role. In when she was in her early thirties, Sanger entered Greenwich Village socialism and left-wing politics, and, within the left, moved swiftly to the left. First an organizer for the Socialist party, she soon joined the International Workingmen of the (IWW). Trained as a nurse, she also worked briefly as a visiting nurse for the Street Settlement. In 1912, Sanger began writing articles on sex-related ("What Every Girl Should Know") for the Socialist weekly, the *Call*, and in published her own radical monthly, the *Woman Rebel*. The *Rebel* sought to combat women's enslavement by "machinery, by wage slavery, by bourgeois morality, by customs, laws, and superstitions." It also promoted "birth control," a term Sanger coined. "A Woman's body belongs to herself alone," the *Rebel* declared. "Enslavement is the most complete denial of a woman's right to life and liberty."

In the next few years, as the birth-control movement took shape, Sanger through a series of formative experiences. After the U.S. Post Office declared *Woman Rebel* unavailable, she fled the country to avoid a federal trial—but left a pamphlet, "Family Limitation," that explained contraceptive methods, as she had not. Her colleagues on the left, such as Emma Goldman and Elizabeth Flynn, distributed it. In England, meanwhile, Sanger absorbed the eugenic view of sexual romanticism of a new mentor, Havelock Ellis, who urged her to focus on the birth-control cause. In Holland, next, she learned more about contraceptive devices. Sanger returned to New York in 1915, a birth-control campaigner in full: due in part to the arrest and trial of her first husband, William Sanger, who would soon leave. Her pace now increased. In the fall of 1916, Margaret Sanger opened the first birth-control clinic, in Brownsville, Brooklyn, a working-class neighborhood. Ten days later, she was arrested, along with two colleagues. Tried and convicted, Sanger was jailed for 30 days. But the left-wing tactic of "direct action" (breaking a law to gain publicity for the cause) had results. When the New York Court of Appeals reviewed Sanger's case in 1918, it paved the way for a broader interpretation of state law that barred dissemination of contraceptive devices. Physicians, said the court, could provide "help or advice to a married person to cure or prevent disease." Doctors would thereafter be pivotal to the birth-control campaign. So would women, who had supported Sanger at her 1916 trial and provided funding for her next endeavor, the *Birth Control Review*, started in 1917.

World War I demolished the left-wing context in which the birth-control movement arose; waves of repression during and after the war put socialists and radicals or in exile, or silenced them. As the 1920s began, Sanger salvaged the birth-control campaign by severing it from its radical base. In the *Birth Control Review*, and through a new organization, the American Birth Control League, formed in 1921, she shifted her arguments to suit the new era. Birth control was no longer a radical cause; it was an educational campaign to turn the tide of popular opinion and especially to solicit support of the medical profession. Contraception was no longer a form of "direct action," an anticapitalist weapon, or a mode of self-help among working-class women. Now it was a tool of eugenics to "discourage the overfertility of the mentally physically defective." Birth control, Sanger claimed, would liberate women

MOTHERS!

Can you afford to have a large family?
Do you want any more children?
If not, why do you have them?
DO NOT KILL, DO NOT TAKE LIFE, BUT PREVENT
Safe, Harmless Information can be obtained of trained
Nurses at

46 AMBOY STREET
NEAR PITKIN AVE. — BROOKLYN.

Tell Your Friends and Neighbors. All Mothers Welcome
A registration fee of 10 cents entitles any mother to this information.

בומערס!

וועט איר פערמערקן צו האבען א גרויסע פאמיליע?
וועט איר וואלטן נאך קינדער?
אויס נעם, וואס איר האט איר זיין?
קענדיקט נעם, נעמט נעם קיין זעכען, נעם קיין קינדער וו.

וועט איר פערמערקן צו האבען א גרויסע פאמיליע?
וועט איר וואלטן נאך קינדער?
אויס נעם, וואס איר האט איר זיין?
קענדיקט נעם, נעמט נעם קיין זעכען, נעם קיין קינדער וו.

וועט איר פערמערקן צו האבען א גרויסע פאמיליע?
וועט איר וואלטן נאך קינדער?
אויס נעם, וואס איר האט איר זיין?
קענדיקט נעם, נעמט נעם קיין זעכען, נעם קיין קינדער וו.

MADRI!

Potete permettervi il lusso d'avere altri bambini?
Ne volete ancora?
Se non ne volete più, perché continuate a metterli
al mondo? NON UCCIDETE MA PREVENITE!

Informazioni sicure ed innocue saranno fornite da infermiere autorizzate a
46 AMBOY STREET Near Pitkin Ave. Brooklyn
a cominciare dal 12 Ottobre. Avvertite la vostra amica a vicino.
Tutte le madri sono ben accette. La tassa d'iscrizione di 10 centesimi dà diritto
a qualunque madre di ricevere consigli ed informazioni gratis.

A 1916 handbill advertising the services of the Brownsville clinic in English, Yiddish, and Italian. As providing information about contraception violated New York law, Margaret Sanger and her two colleagues at the clinic were quickly arrested. (*Library of Congress*)

repression ("loathing, disgust, or indifference") and promote new ideals of sex, "sex as a psychic and spiritual avenue of expression." Finally, it would enable women to be full participants in life. With birth control, Sanger wrote, the "moral force of woman's nature will be unchained." Before World War I, Margaret Sanger had taken direct action to liberate working-class women from "enforced motherhood." In the 1920s, she espoused the new ideal of sexual emancipation, just as it reached a nationwide middle-class audience.

In the 1920s, the impact of contraception became visible. It legitimized female sexuality, as no tract or argument could do. It contributed to new sexual norms. Without contraception, the dictum that repression was unhealthy would hardly have been viable. It promoted premarital experimentation, although not to the extent that traditionalists feared. It enabled couples to marry earlier, since the economic burden

of children could be postponed. Most decidedly, contraception transformed in ideals. Separating sex from procreation, it released the companionate potent marriage. Liberating women from "involuntary motherhood," it transformed tal sex from "obligation" to "communication." At the same time, contraception itated the new desire to merge marriage and career. It is fair to say that through the 1920s, contraception was at once the crux of the new morality, the open wedge of "economic independence," and the most crucial change in women's

The brunt of its impact of course fell on middle-class women. Contraception had long been a common middle-class goal, but in the 1920s it received more approval and acceptance. Widespread use of the pessary (or diaphragm), meant made it even more effective. Middle-class women, who favored this method, able to obtain the device from private physicians, although doctors were required to look for "indications" and prescribe contraceptives only to "cure or prevent disease." But indications were broadened in private practice, just as birth-control advocates argued that they should be broadened in law. Meanwhile, illegal import of contraceptive devices expanded, creating a lively underground traffic. At decade, one researcher estimated that up to six out of ten American women used contraceptives. Surveys of middle-class women supported such claims. Blanchard Manasses found that 80 percent of their sample of young women planned to use contraception when they married. Of the unmarried women interviewed by Kath Bement Davis, 85 percent believed contraception should be practiced in marriage and less than 8 percent disapproved. About 75 percent of the married women Davis's sample avowed belief in the principle of contraception, and almost all of group practiced it.

Although contraception remained a middle-class perquisite, there were ramifications beyond. In the prewar years, birth-control activists had some expressed the fear that they would never convert the working class. After Sa published *Women and the New Race* in 1920, she received thousands of letters from working-class women expressing resentment that contraception was a class privilege. "The rich don't seem to have so many children, why should the poor who can't afford to?" asked one correspondent. "I cannot see why it's always the poor that's got to suffer," wrote another. In the 1920s, contraceptive use was broadened, as much result of the World War I campaign against venereal disease as of the birth-control crusade. Working-class use, according to contemporaries, never reached the middle-class high. For instance, one research project in 1925 suggested that among married women aged 25 to 29 with one child, about 80 percent of the well-off only 36 percent of poorer women used contraception. In Middletown, the Lynd reported, contraceptive use presented "the appearance of a pyramid." "Relatively cautious" methods were in almost universal use at the top, among the "bus group," but then declined as one descended the social scale. Among African Americans, however, whose fertility fell rapidly between the late nineteenth century and World War II, extensive support for birth control prevailed. Black migrants to deliberately limited families, recent research suggests: blacks participated in founding of birth-control clinics; the black press covered birth-control issues; leaders such as W.E.B. Dubois linked woman's progress and independence to "motherhood at her own discretion."

Still, the birth-control crusade of the 1920s never became either a working-class movement or a feminist movement. Both wings of organized feminism, in fact, ignored the issue of contraception. Before the war, when Margaret Sanger had tried to drum up suffragist support, she was told to wait until the vote was won. But after 1920, there was no support in the feminist camp. In 1927, the NWP rejected a birth-control plank, and three years later the LWV refused to study the issue. There were of course supportive individuals. Physician Alice Hamilton, for instance, endorsed birth control as a cure for poverty. As she wrote in the *Birth Control Review* in 1925, the poor should have "the knowledge and power which has long been in possession of those who need it least." But leading feminists remained suspicious or ambivalent. When Sanger appealed to Carrie Chapman Catt in 1920 to support the cause, Catt's reply epitomized feminist equivocation. "Please be assured that I am no opponent even though I do not stand by your side," she wrote.

In my judgment you claim too much as the result of one thing. Most reformers do that. Your reform is too narrow to appeal to me and too sordid. When the advocacy of contraception is combined with as strong a propaganda for continence (not to prevent conception but in the interest of common decency), it will find me a more willing sponsor. . . . There will come some gains even from the program you advocate—and some increase in immorality through safety. The gains will slightly overtop the losses however, so I am no enemy of you and yours.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman would later endorse birth control too, but in the 1920s she was a formidable critic. Gilman voiced her objections in the *Birth Control Review*, where she attacked Sanger's defense point by point. She denied that sex was the ultimate in spiritual communion or self-expression, that "indulgence" was necessarily an improvement over "repression," and that new prescriptions were better than old ones. Birth control, Gilman contended, would not improve marriage but transform it into "unromantic, dutiful submission to male indulgence." Finally, she pinpointed a double standard of expectations. "When men talk of sex, they mean only intercourse," Gilman wrote. "For women it means the whole process of reproduction, love, and mating." Both Gilman and Catt suspected that birth control would bolster an old form of male tyranny, forcing women into male-ordained sexual roles. Significantly, neither viewed contraception as an individual "right" or a form of "protection," but, rather, as a new factor in sexual politics.

Without a feminist base, a working-class base, or a left-wing base, the birth-control movement of the 1920s created its own constituency. Margaret Sanger had embarked on this effort during the war when she began to win the allegiance of well-off women. In the 1920s she turned to professional men. To alter both medical opinion and popular opinion, the American Birth Control League sought to win the endorsement of influential opinion-makers—especially physicians, but also academics, eugenicists, and other experts. A related thrust was the ABCL campaign for "doctors only" bills. For the first half of the decade, this policy was controversial. Former suffragist Mary Ware Dennett founded the Voluntary Parenthood League, which fought to repeal obscenity laws. The "doctors only" policy, it contended, meant "special privilege class legislation," as only the well-off had access to doctors. But by

mid-decade, the Dennett faction had capsized and disbanded. "Doctors only" was now the thrust of the birth-control movement. The ABCL strove to broaden, repeal, the obscenity laws so that physicians could legally prescribe contraceptive pills to healthy women. The physician became the key to contraceptive progress.

This policy of course affected birth-control clinics, which the ABCL now published. Here physicians took charge, as had not been the case at the Brown clinic in 1916. In the 1920s, clinic doctors could prescribe contraceptives and stretching "indications" or by sending healthy patients to private physicians would do so. Birth control was still a precarious business. Clinics appeared in 23 cities in 12 states, but many were short-lived. At the decade's end, some 30 were in operation, though their numbers would increase rapidly during the 1930s. Significantly, the clinics had more of a eugenicist goal than a feminist one. In 1919, Margaret Sanger argued that birth control would produce "more children from the fit, less from the unfit," and this theme became a dominant one. In the 1920s, Sanger stressed the movement's mission to eliminate the illiterate and derivate. Birth control would not only protect women from pregnancy, it would protect society from decay. "A high rate of fecundity," Sanger wrote in 1922, "ways associated with the direct poverty, mental defects, feeble-mindedness, and transmissible traits." Eugenic arguments helped to win support from doctors, professionals, and well-off contributors. The last was vital, as clinics were expensive. They needed salaried doctors, salaried staff, medical backing, community support, and operating funds. A new branch of philanthropy, the clinics were also a mission of social control.

While organizing the clinic movement, the ABCL turned much of its attention to physicians, seeking their support for contraception. Medical views of the movement were in transition. Doctors had already sanctioned a first wave of sexual revolution or evolution, by rejecting continence as a moral and medical ideal. Support shifted to moderate "indulgence." Sanction of birth control was a next logical step. Moreover, physicians were suspicious of "indiscriminate" distribution of contraceptives by outsiders, just as they were hostile to the encroachment of Sheppard-Thompson outsiders on medical turf. By mid-decade, the medical profession had begun to ground; physicians preferred to control birth control themselves. "Conjugal hygiene" now became a part of the medical curriculum, a topic at professional conferences, and the province of an AMA committee. Margaret Sanger's pragmatic campaign for medical support was proving effective.

Though gaining influence in the AMA, the ABCL had far less impact on the 1920s, obscenity laws were neither broadened nor repealed. Contraception remained precarious until federal court decisions of the 1930s. A decision opened the mails to contraceptive information and devices and in 1927 *United States v. One Package*, a suit brought by physician and birth-controller H. Stone won for doctors the right to import contraceptive devices. In the 1920s, however, the law had not caught up to the new morality. This was evident in the birth-controller Mary Ware Dennett, still an opponent of the obscenity laws crusader for "free speech." Dennett advocated free dispersal of sex education material and contraceptive information without interference. But in 1929 she was arrested and convicted under the obscenity laws for mailing out copies of a publish-

education essay, describing reproduction. Upholding her conviction, a federal court of appeals contended that Dennett's motive, an educational one, was irrelevant, as the information conveyed was "clearly indecent." Unlike Mary Ware Dennett, Margaret Sanger profited from whatever controversy she created. When her prize New York City birth-control clinic, run by physician Hannah Stone, was raided by the police in 1929, Sanger's courting of the medical profession paid off. Physicians now supported her cause. The birth-control movement of the 1920s succeeded not only in converting physicians but in converting itself—into a respectable middle-class reform movement.

Whereas organized feminism, diminished in strength and divided in policy, had difficulty adapting to the New Era, the birth-control movement had done so with finesse. The ABCL quickly became a centralized, professional organization. With its appeal to doctors, its eugenic thrust, and its aura of science and technology, it was able to survive and prosper in an apolitical, antireform, and increasingly antifeminist era. Although Sanger remained dominant, the birth-control movement was guided by professional men. In 1926, the ABCL reached a peak membership of 37,000 native-born, well-off supporters, mainly from the North and Midwest. Almost nine out of ten were women volunteers who devoted their time to the league's multifaceted campaigns. But professional men assumed the managerial, influential roles. Margaret Sanger, meanwhile, recruited among the prominent, speaking to women's clubs and social service groups, which she had once denounced as capitalist tools. While paid field workers organized local leagues and health professionals ran clinics, Sanger, using extensive private funds obtained through her second marriage, hired a physician to address medical societies. The one-time radicalism of the birth-control movement had been modernized, professionalized, and mainstreamed.

In the 1914 *Woman Rebel*, Margaret Sanger had declared that "Women cannot be on an equal footing with men until they have full and complete control over their reproductive function." In the 1920s, equal footing emerged as an ideal—for supporters of the ERA, for women striving for "economic independence," for women combining careers and marriage, and for "pals" and "partners" with romantic hopes of companionate relationships. New aspirations, from individualism to equal rights in the "sexual sphere," permeated the middle class. Throughout the decade, sexual rules were changing, but social, economic, and political rules remained much the same. Neither the vote nor contraception, alone or together, ensured equal footing. In the 1930s and 1940s, two national emergencies, depression and war, provided a new combination of liabilities and opportunities.

SUGGESTED READINGS AND SOURCES

Surveys of twentieth-century women's history discuss women's roles in the 1920s. See, for instance, William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (New York, 1991), chs. 1–5; Lois W. Banner, *Women in Modern America: A Brief History*, 2d ed. (New York, 1984), ch. 4; Peter Gabriel Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Gender Identities in Modern America*, 3d ed. (Baltimore, Md., 1998), ch. 5; Sheila M. Rothman, *Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present* (New York, 1978), chs. 4 and 5; and

Rosalind Rosenberg, *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1992), ch. 3. Dorothy M. Brown surveys the decade in *Setting a Course: American Women 1920s* (Boston, 1987).

Feminism in the 1920s is examined in Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, Conn., 1987); William L. O'Neill, *Feminism in America*, rev. ed. (Brunswick, N.J., 1989), chs. 7 and 8; Susan D. Becker, *The Origins of the Equal Amendment: Feminism Between the Wars* (Westport, Conn., 1981); J. Stanley Lemon, *Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s*, 2d ed. (Charlottesville, Va., 1990); Lois M. and Joan M. Jensen, eds., *Decades of Discontent: The Women's Movement, 1920–1940* (Boulder, 1987); Christine A. Lunardini, *From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights* (New York, 1986); Wendy Sarvasy, "Beyond the Difference versus Equality Policy Debate," *Signs* 17 (V 1992), 320–362. Elaine Showalter, ed., *These Modern Women: Autobiographical Essays from 1920s* (Old Westbury, N.Y., 1978) contains the series of articles by feminists published in *Nation* in 1926–1927. For the intersection of women's politics and constitutional law, see G. Zimmerman, "The Jurisprudence of Equality: The Women's Minimum Wage, the Equal Rights Amendment, and *Adkins v. Children's Hospital*, 1905–1923," *Journal of American History*, 78 (June 1991), 188–225, and Vivien Hart, *Bound By Our Constitution: Women, Acts, and the Minimum Wage* (Princeton, N.J., 1994). For the impact of the Sheppard-T Act, see Lynn Curry, *Gender, Health, and Progress in Illinois, 1900–1930* (Columbus, 1999), ch. 5. An important article on the fate of feminism in the 1920s is Estelle B. Free "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870–1920," *Feminist Studies*, 5 (Fall 1979), 512–529. See also Freedman, "The New Woman: The Views of Women in the 1920s," *Journal of American History*, 61 (September 1974), 37.

The impact of woman suffrage is explored in Felice D. Gordon, *After Winning: The of the New Jersey Suffragists, 1920–1947* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1986); Kristi Andersen, *Suffrage: Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics Before the New Deal* (Chicago, 1996); and L. Harvey, *Voices Without Leverage: Women in American Electoral Politics, 1920–1970* (New York, 1998), chs. 4 and 5. See also Nancy F. Cott, "Across the Great Divide: Women in Politics before and after 1920" in Louise A. Tilly and Patricia Gurin, eds., *Women, Politics, and (New York, 1990)*, pp. 153–176. Elizabeth Israels Perry examines a unique political figure, *Belle Moskowitz: Feminine Politics and the Exercise of Power in the Age of Alfred E. (New York, 1987)*. For women's roles in politics, see Melanie Gustafson, Kristie Miller Elisabeth Israels Perry, eds., *We Have Come to Stay: American Women and Political 1880–1960* (Albuquerque, N.M., 1999), which includes essays on the 1920s. For the political peace, see Carrie A. Foster, *The Women and the Warriors: The U.S. section of the Women's national League for Peace and Freedom, 1915–1946* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1995), chs. 4–7. Jo Kornbluh and Mary Frederickson present the workers' education movement in *Sisterhood Solidarity: Workers' Education for Women, 1914–1984* (Philadelphia, 1984). For the Bryn Mawr summer school, see the film *The Women of Summer* (1984), by Suzanne Bauman and Heller, in which former students tell how the school affected their lives.

Anne Firor Scott discusses the activism of southern women in "After Suffrage: Southern Women in the 1920s," *Journal of Southern History*, 30 (August 1964), 298–315, and Sco Southern Lady: *From Pedestal to Politics, 1830–1930* (Chicago, 1970), ch. 8. See also M. Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York, 1993), ch. 6. For the women's interracial movement and development of the ASWPL, see Jacqueline Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie*