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Sarah Elizabeth Pulver  
HAPPY IS THE WOMAN WHO  
HAS NO HISTORY: AN  
HISTORICAL DISCOURSE  
ANALYSIS OF WOMEN, THEIR  
CHANGING ROLES AND  
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AMERICA

ABSTRACT

This analysis examines the historical mental health needs that emerged for women at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of drastic changes in the tenor of the United States. The research explores literature pertaining to women from 1890-1920 in the United States and relates to four main topic areas as a way to examine trends and patterns in mental health needs and supports at the time in history. The Historical Research approach is well suited for this research as the specific goal of the study is to examine the historical sources for patterns and trends to better inform the present (Rubin and Babbie, 2013, p. 247). As an historical study, use of primary source journals, magazines, newspapers and other communication sources provide information about how the study subject was treated during the historical time of interest. Women's changing roles and the perceptions that society had of them created challenges that lead to necessary mental health treatments and support. The literature is used to further explore the patterns and trends found in the primary sources. Through an examination of primary source literature of Presidential Election 2012, connections are made between two significant periods of time sighting the implications for the importance of social work practice.

HAPPY IS THE WOMAN WHO HAS NO HISTORY: AN HISTORICAL DISCOURSE  
ANALYSIS OF WOMEN, THEIR CHANGING ROLES AND SOCIETY'S CHANGING  
PERCEPTIONS 1890-1920 IN AMERICA

A project based on an independent investigation  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master in Social Work.

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2013

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank my thesis advisor Elaine for her never ending positive support, encouragement and willingness to work creatively with me and of course her wisdom of organization. Sara Fudjack, I would have never survived this project, let alone this year without you, your support, green eggs, and dominos, you are my ggxoxo. This project would not have been possible without the Smith Library Archives; it was truly an amazing experience to have the opportunity to work with such special materials as well as such a lovely staff. Julia, so happy to have found you in the Archives as well! I would like to thank the Smith Library Staff, especially Ella, for humoring me every time I came in talking about this project and picking up the key to the “Tibetan Scroll Room.” Now that I mention it, I should thank that special little room where pretty much all this writing happened, thank you Tibetan Prayer Scrolls for your entire good juju. Thank you to my family, you have been wonderfully supportive and great sports during this journey, I love you and can’t wait to come home. Thank you to my friends in Philly and New York who allowed me to talk about this work even when there were probably more pressing issues at hand, although I sure couldn’t see them! Alyssa, thank you for letting me come over and feeding me and letting me do my laundry and watch tv and be mistaken for your girlfriend, best cousin ever- thank you for moving here. RJ, you are amazing to me in lots of ways, most recently for being able to paginate this project.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century came to a close women's roles in the United States began to dramatically change. The atmosphere in the United States preceding the new century was one of major cultural and historical shifts. The country underwent major political change with the election of Lincoln, experienced financial upheaval with the market revolution, and entered into a war on home land with the Civil War to end slavery, after which came the Reconstruction and the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the Constitution (Foner, 1997, p. 5). In the later part of the 1800's, at the turn of the century, the country again went through drastic changes. In the 1890's there was a major influx of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, a great migration from rural America into the cities and a new Progressive movement which was motivated by women for the most part (Foner, 1997, p. 5). With these dramatic cultural changes came a shift in society's perception of women. The different and changing perceptions that society had about women resulted in challenges to women. These challenges ranged from combating society's negative views, domestic stressors, pathology of gender, gaining access and rights, respect in family and relationships, education, etc. Women's challenges gave way to women's needs, and this historical study will examine specific types of needs presented in mental health treatments. The writer argues that many realms of our society continue to view women's roles as such today. While many aspects of women's lives have changed as a result of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the

Women's Liberation Movement, Equal Rights Movement, education etc., there are ways in which our independence, sexuality and gender continue to be pathologized today.

In order to understand the changes, roles and consequences that this time period encompassed this historical study will examine primary source data during this time for patterns that represent this time for women. The Purpose of this study was to examine the historical mental health needs that emerged for women at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of drastic changes in the tenor of the United States. The research examined literature pertaining to women from 1890-1920 in the United States and related to four main topic areas as a way to examine trends and patterns in mental health needs and supports at the time in history. The four main topic areas that were examined were be women's changing roles, society's changing perceptions of women, challenges, and mental health needs and supports that emerged as a result of the three previous topics.

The topic was examined through careful reading of primary sources that were sourced from the Sophia Smith Collection and Smith College Archives at Smith College. In the examination of the primary sources the study looked for how women's behaviors of independence were pathologized by society at large and what the impending treatments were at this time. This study examined the new and existing roles of women in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the United States, how societal perceptions of culture influenced women's lives and affected their roles, what were the causes for the changes in dramatic role changes in late 19<sup>th</sup> century women in the United States, how did the change affect their mental health and what were the treatment needs and further what treatments emerged. Finally, attention was paid to diversity amongst women at this historical time based on primary sources specifically targeting women of color.

The implication of this study in terms of clinical social work practice is the importance familiarity with historical events as well as present events. Although there have been improvements in the treatment of women in the field of mental health, this study illustrates some of the ways in which independence, sexuality and gender have continued to be pathologized in women. What better way to understand our current lives and move forward to a more positive future than to understand our past more clearly; and with this sentiment the writer would encourage clinicians to delve into the historical treatments of the populations they are working with as it provides us the key to understanding our present and future treatments as well as how to improve them and advocate.



## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review and Methodology:

#### Primary Sources and Study Plan

This chapter provides a review of the key primary sources used to inform this study and presents the study methodology. The Purpose of this study was to examine the historical mental health needs that emerged for women at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of drastic changes in the tenor of the United States. The research examined literature pertaining to women from 1890-1920 in the United States and related to four main topic areas as a way to examine trends and patterns in articles about the chosen topics at the time in history. The Historical Research approach was well suited for this research as the specific goal of the study is to examine the historical sources for patterns and trends to better inform the present (Rubin and Babbie, 2013, p. 247). As an historical study, use of primary source journals, magazines, newspapers and other communication sources provide information about how the study subject was treated during the historical time of interest. For this paper, the historical period of interest was during the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, roughly between 1890's and 1920's. Each of the selected sources had its own set of values, and philosophical orientation, representing a spectrum of cultural reflections of the historical time in which they were popular. In order to gain a rounded, comprehensive understanding of the attitudes and perspectives of the time, examination of reflections about women's roles, status and mental health conditions was accomplished by reading articles across the spectrum of sources of the day. Because of their importance in

contributing to this study, this chapter reviewed each of the primary sources in terms of a set of criteria that reflect its orientation. The specific criteria that were used to examine the sources were; who began the source and a piece of their history, mission of the specific journal or paper, the political underpinnings, and the target audience of the source. Each of the major sources are presented, and described in terms of these criteria. Chapter II provides a summary about how and why each of the chosen sources contributed specifically to this historical study.

### Sources (Historical)

The historical primary sources are organized in terms of similarities as well as differences when examined by the previously mentioned criteria. In examining the sources it was found that all of the journals and newspapers that held wide readership during the historical time of interest included forms of creative writing, whether it was short stories for adults or children, poems, or serial fictions. These creative writings were a selling point for the sources and during the time period these writings were something that was common in sources no matter the mission, audience, political alignment or who specifically founded the source. Most publications from this time were founded by several people and those people were most often men, even if the publication was to have a target audience of women, as in the case of *Good Housekeeping*. *Good Housekeeping* magazine was first published in 1885 by Clark W. Bryan; it was a magazine whose target audience was the American (female) homemaker (A Brief History, 2013, para 7).

### Political Values

Some sources were decidedly more political than others. *The Colored American* and *The Forerunner* had more significant political underpinnings. Both publications sought to educate specific audiences as well as strived for achievement and continued independence of their

audience. *The Colored American* magazine was published in Boston in 1900 by the Colored Co-Operative Publishing Co. The stated purpose or mission of the magazine was “devoted to a higher culture of Religion, Literature, Science, Music and Art of the Negro, universally. Acting as a stimulus to young and old- the old to higher achievements, the young to emulate their example” ( Dworkin, Ira May, 2013, para 1). *The Forerunner* was a monthly magazine started in November 1909 and ran until 1916 that was owned and published by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. This magazine was a way for Charlotte Perkins Gilman to express her ideas on social and feminist reform, women’s issues, political issues, and any and everything else that was happening at the time. The magazine included articles, poetry, serial and short fiction, opinion pieces, and essay as well as advertisements. She was a feminist who called for women to gain their own economic independence (Gilman, Charlotte Perkins 1909).

#### Philosophical Bases

While both *The Colored American* and *The Forerunner* were political they were also some of the more progressive publications just as *The New York Times* was. *The New York Times* was founded in 1851 by Jarvis Raymond and George Jones who intended to issue the paper every morning except for Sunday. From the start the paper took a pro-union and anti-slavery stance which made it the target of some mob activities in the mid 1800’s. In 1876 the paper began to move away from the Republican Party and during Grover Cleveland’s presidential candidacy it finally cast off its reputation as a Republican paper by fully endorsing Cleveland’s candidacy. In 1912 the paper began a column aptly entitled the “Neediest Cases” that was dedicated to people in the city who needed help and were in desperate situations (New York Times Timeline, 1851-2013).

#### Popular Readership (United States)

Uniquely, the publication *Good Housekeeping*, which was founded by a man and later bought by a corporation of men, was a magazine with a mission of commercial product placement to women in the home. The mission of the magazine was “to produce and perpetuate perfection as may be obtained in the household.” The magazine focused on children, fashion and household products with fiction stories for children and adults. The first years that the magazine was in publication it was circulated semi-monthly in 1885 and cost .10 cents a copy. The magazine kept its readership by keeping a strong focus on women and the home. In 1911 George Hearst took over and his legacy remains the owners of this successful magazine. George Hearst was interested in getting into politics; however he needed financial backing to get him there. Hearst sought business opportunities in his home of California to start his political career and as he was a miner and purchased a mine; soon after he was able to purchase a newspaper. He was elected to a state legislator seat in California and was the only person to vote against the ratification of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment (A Brief History, 2013, para 4).

Unlike the previously examined publications, other primary sources that have been explored in this study were firsthand accounts of women’s mental illness. *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* is one of Sigmund Freud’s most influential works. Written in 1905 about a young female patient it is a case study of what was then known as “hysteria” which was documented as almost exclusively experienced by women. Freud’s young patient is examined here in this in-depth case study where he used his famous talking cure and for one of the first times introduces the psychological community to the notion of transference (Freud, 1905, p. 5). *Women of the Asylum: Voices Behind the Walls* is a collection of twenty-six first-hand accounts of women who were hospitalized in “asylums” or mental institutions during the years 1840-1945. The book was published by Doubleday in 1994 and was edited by Geller and Harris. The

women's accounts are divided into four sections and each section is prefaced by an introduction by the editors. The editor's introductions set the historical stage for the women's first-hand accounts. For the purposes of this historical analysis the chapters II and III are used to work with in the specified time period being explored (Geller and Harris, 1994). It is clear that the major sources that informed this study embraced either a highly traditional role of women, or one that was more forward facing. There was seemingly no 'middle ground' in terms of the values presented in the journals that have been examined.

#### Sources (2012 Election)

The sources in this section were examined using the same criteria as the historical sources examined previously. In this variety of sources some can be linked based on their political-ness, others on wide readership, and one source standing alone representing differing opinions on women and their roles through a religious scope.

#### Political Values

Both *Ms. Magazine* and *Ebony Magazine* are steeped in current political motivations as well as were founded on specific political underpinnings. *Ms. Magazine* began as a "one shot" insert in the *New York Magazine* in December of 1971. Subsequently the second wave of feminism movement parlayed into *Ms. Magazine* by way of two women who had been working in the movement for years. Letty Cottin Pogrebin and Gloria Steinem worked to turn the "movement into a magazine" in July of 1972. As of December 31, 2001 the Feminist Majority Foundation assumed ownership of *Ms. Magazine* and has continued this ownership through to present day. The magazine is published by Liberty Media for Women LLC. Together the Feminist Majority Foundation and *Ms. Magazine* are "committed to ensuring that *Ms.* thrives as the forum for feminist ideas and as a springboard for the development and spread of feminist

ideas and action” (Ms. Magazine, 2012, p. 10). *Ebony* Magazine was founded November 1, 1945 by John H. Johnson and is currently under direction of Editor-in-Chief Amy D. Barnett. When the magazine began the goals were to “focus on the achievements of blacks from ‘Harlem to Hollywood’ and to ‘offer positive images of blacks in a world of negative images’” (Shahid, Sharron 2010, para 1). The Magazine is the “No. 1 source for an authoritative perspective on the Black-American community. *Ebony* features the best thinkers, trendsetters, hottest celebrities and next-generation leaders of Black-America. *Ebony* “ignites conversation, promotes empowerment and celebrates aspiration” (Ebony Magazine, About Ebony, para 1). John H. Johnson was born in 1918 and was the grandson of slaves in Atlanta. He and his mother moved to Chicago where he attended an academically rigorous high school for black students, he graduated in 1936 and was subsequently invited to speak at the Urban League which was an early Civil Rights Organization. Johnson began the magazine in 1945 and was the first publisher to acknowledge Black markets and use them to profile Blacks and "show not only the Negroes but also white people that Negroes got married, had beauty contests, gave parties, ran successful businesses, and did all the other normal things of life" (Brennan, 2006, para 3).

#### Popular Readership (United States)

In terms of a wide readership the sources that were examined were *Redbook* and the *New York Times*. *The New York Times* can essentially be accessed everywhere and through every device as of 2012 and according to the *Huffington Post* on-line edition, *Redbook* Magazine was the number one magazine for women at the start of 2012. *The New York Times* has been publishing daily papers since 1851. Since its induction it has changed quite a bit. Readers of *The New York Times* can find it on-line, on their personal computers, on their smart phones, and yes they can continue to find it on their door step. The newspaper is no longer just owned by one or

two people but whole corporate governance with many investors. *The New York Times* has continued a time honored community benefactor position of its “Neediest Cases” column, raising money for the cities neediest citizens. In addition to this act of social responsibility *The New York Times* also has several educational initiative scholarships as well as environmental stewardship programs. *Redbook* Magazine began in 1903 and was part of the Seven Sister Magazine conglomerate. Post World War II the target audience of the magazine was the American Youth population who were open minded and concerned with political movements. In 1965 the magazine moved its target more towards women’s rights, sexual harassment, and the working woman. By 1970 *Redbook* was considered the most intellectual of the Seven Sister Magazines. The Hearst Corporation took over in the early 1980’s and this intellectual and target audience was no more. The tone of the magazine changed from feminist to a “how to guide” for mothers on fashion, fitness, home, family, jobs, sex and nutrition. This is the current state of the magazine and its Editor in Chief is Stacy Morrison (Newsstand: 1925, p. 286).

### Cultural Issues

*Ladies Against Feminism* is a blog that takes a staunch religious stance on feminism it was founded in 2002 by Mrs. Lydia Sherman and Mrs. Jennie Chancy. This source can be similar to the other sources in this section because it covers the same topics of feminism, politics, women’s roles, etc., however the take on these topics are decidedly motivated by religion. The founders of the blog state that publishing allows “thoughtful, biblical responses to feminism and to encourage other women in their God-given roles.” “We are for maidenhood, modesty, virtue, intelligence, womanly arts, and femininity. Join the new revolution!” The tag line of the blog is as follows: “Since 2002, *LAF* has refuted the follies of feminism and promoted a strong, intelligent, biblical view of womanhood. We love femininity and are delighted to share the

beauties of the womanly virtues with women all over the world.” The blog contains several searchable subjects that include but are not limited to abortion, birth control, education, fatherhood, feminism, history, marriage, motherhood, Planned Parenthood, sex-education, submission and womanhood. The majority of the articles are written by men about women and how women should be conducting themselves in the previously mentioned subject headers. Although the blog was founded by the two women previously mentioned it is run under the oversight of Minister Stanley Sherman who is Lydia Sherman’s husband (Chancey and Sherman, 2013, para 2).

The primary source used in the examination of the late 1800’s/ early 1900’s helped to identify several patterns. These patterns and trends included but were not limited to articles predominantly authored by men even in the women’s magazines about women, political underpinnings that were expressed openly, and the inclusivity of works of fiction in most sources at this time. There were similar trends and patterns found in the primary source materials used in the examination of the present time Election 2012. Some of these patterns and trends included but were not limited to political and religious motivations of the actual source material, as well as what sources were actually dominating the wide readership list i.e. what lay behind these particular sources and how they are connected to the historical primary sources. These connections will be further explored in Chapter IV/V.

This historical study relies on primary sources to create a picture of women during two specific times in our nation’s history. A study of this type is important to elucidate patterns and trends from history as well as examine how they have impacted women of today in the clinical social work setting. A study has been designed to highlight the historical patterns and trends of women at two distinct times in the United States. The study has been designed to also examine



primary sources during the historical times as well as highlight women's roles, societal perceptions of, challenges and mental health of. Following is a description of the methodology used to guide the study plan.

### Methodology

The research approach being used in this review is an historical analysis study. The approach has been selected to examine the historical mental health needs that emerged for women at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of drastic changes in the tenor of the United States. According to Rubin and Babbie (2013) the historical analysis study can be used to inform our current practice. In this historical analysis, documents of the past are be used to explore recurring pattern that may aid in some explanations of behaviors from the turn of the century in America and serve to inform social work practice of today (p. 247). The first task in the study is to describe the basics of the primary sources, as shown in the above chapter. Two types of source materials are looked at in this historical analysis study. According to Rubin and Babbie (2013) primary source materials are those that were written by someone who is giving a firsthand account of the time and secondary sources provide writing based on the primary sources (p. 248). The rational for choosing a historical analysis study for this particular topic is because of the way in which the primary sources lend themselves to exploring the patterns of the past to inform our present. These sources are utilized in order to track comparative trends and patterns that are comparable to patterns and trends from history. This historical analysis looks at four topics using primary sources from the turn of the century in America to examine the thesis topic mentioned above. The four main topic areas that are examined for the study are women's changing roles, society's changing perceptions of women, challenges that women face, and mental health needs and supports that emerged as a result of the three previous topics. The

rational in choosing these four main topic area is to find an understanding from historical primary sources of how societal perceptions of culture influenced women's lives and affected their roles, what were the causes for the changes in dramatic role changes in late 19<sup>th</sup> century women in the United States, how did the change affect their mental health and what were the treatment needs and further what treatments emerged.

Rubin and Babbie (2013) describe the historical analysis process in two main ways that have contributed to the structure of this specific study, “ the main resources for observation and analysis are historical records...studies that look for recurring patterns that help explain the past and imply possible lessons for the present” (p. 278). The approach was chosen because of its applicability to the specific topic and how it would elucidate the research question which is to examine the historical mental health needs that emerged for women at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of drastic changes in the tenor of the United States. There are 3 subsequent chapters in this study; Chapter III- Patterns and Trends, Chapter IV- Present Implications, Election 2012 and Chapter V- Discussion.

Chapter III- Patterns and Trends summarizes and tracks patterns and trends of primary source materials from 1890-1920. The Chapter is categorized into four sections following the four main topic areas. Each topic is organized similarly with a summarization of literature then a more specific reading of trend and pattern from the articles. Chapter IV- Present Implications, Election 2012 summarizes and tracks patterns and trends of primary source materials from the most recent Election year of 2012 in the United Sates. These patterns and trends are used to make useful connections to similar patterns and trends from Chapter III and inform social work practice of today. Chapter V is the final chapter where the author of the study will opine on the thesis topic.

## CHAPTER III

### Patterns and Trends

Women's changing roles and the perceptions that society had of them created challenges that lead to necessary mental health treatments and supports. This chapter explores the patterns and trends found in the sources presented in Chapter II in order to define the evidence of how women were perceived by the U.S. culture of the time. Further, the chapter provides a sense of women's needs at this specific time in our nation's history. Articles describing women's roles, challenges, perceptions and mental health needs and supports at the turn of the century in America were sourced from The Sophia Smith Archives collection at Smith College Library as well as other archival collections. These articles came from mostly "ladies journals" or journals that were geared towards a female audience, or speeches that were given by men to women audiences, while some articles came from sources of wide readership like *The New York Times* and *The Colored American Magazine*. Some of the articles were written by men and some by women.

The result of this review and analysis formed the basis of a general description of the status of women and their needs during this rapidly and dramatically changing time. Based on this information, a profile of women of those times emerged based on the popular media of the day.

Roles

In the late 1900's in the United States, the country was changing. As the country changed women's roles experienced major changes too. Two of the largest shifts at the turn of the century were the amount of women who had joined the workforce and gaining the right to vote with the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Twenty-five percent of women over the age of fourteen had joined the workforce by the year 1900 although it should be noted that working was seen as a temporary rest on the way to marriage and family. In a June 1917 issue of *Good Housekeeping*, the focus of an article was the mobilization of women in the workforce. The United States was preparing for WWI and the women of this country were preparing to join with the thousands of women across the sea that had already joined the war effort in the factories and other war-ordained tasks (Wilhelm, 1917, p. 45). The author of this 1917 article (who was a male writer) seems to question just *how* the American women could contribute to the war effort. Wilhelm seems to not be able to imagine what the American woman is capable to actually doing. The author interviews several women and men who are working with women in the war effort and seems able to change his tune by the end of the article enough to allow his readers to know what; in fact the American women were doing at the time. In New York City women were attending Hunter College to learn military skills to be of service in freight, boats, camps and work on the coast. American women were most often found and appreciated, according to Wilhelm, in the munitions factories. The machines were small and the women were appreciated for their "economically superior work compared to men." Many munitions factories ceased employing men because women produced better work, faster (Wilhelm, 1917, p. 143). Even before these articles began to publish in the women's journals with the outcry for women to come to duty for the country, articles were being published in *The Colored American Magazine* calling out with an "urgent need for a call to business" (Madison, 1909, para 1). In 1909 *The*

*Colored American Magazine* published an article calling all men and women to business, as well as to train and educate the young boys and girls (Madison, 1909, p 5). Madison continues to speak equally to young boys and girls, men and women throughout the article, calling for the race to “cherish an interest in the race but it is the duty of the leaders to teach the masses that it is devolved on them to support our enterprises. This requires organization” (Madison, 1909, para 6.)

Women were working to obtain the right to vote and by 1918 two million women belonged to the National American Woman Suffrage Association (Geller & Harris, 1994, p. 176). In addition to the labor movement and the Suffrage Associations, 19<sup>th</sup> century women continued to have increasing access to college educations, desire more independence, reform minded as well as be more sexually open than their women in previous times (Geller & Harris, 1994, p. 171).

While times were changing for women, the country as a whole was perhaps more reluctant to let go of its Victorian morals especially when it came to sex. In the late 1800-early 1900's there was a movement on the fringes of American society that were setting out to reform the way that the public thought about sex and more specifically the way in which women had been seen in their prescribed roles around sex. The Free Lovers had a goal to aid women in being released from stereotypical negative positions such as prostitutes, unwed mothers and bastard children and begin to feel those positions with pride. The Free Lovers were a group of women reformers who wrote articles and letters in anarchist newspapers to support women, challenge the current sexual culture, and counsel readers as needed (Battan, 2004, p. 604).

While the Free Lovers were working on a decidedly more underground current to reform the countries ideals about sex, specifically women's sexual expression and desires; a high school

teacher in New York City was making headlines for challenging society's ideals about women's roles in terms of sexuality, motherhood and capability. In 1914 a New York City public high school teacher went up against the school district and ended up butting heads with the Supreme Court. The teacher requested a leave of absence to give birth and rear a child and then return to her teaching duties. At this time in history married women had taken leaves from their teaching positions before, however being truthful about giving birth did not happen, the New York City School Board did not ask either. The woman was given a trial in front of the NYC School Board and was they passed a resolution that found her "guilty of motherhood" (Young, 1914, p. 29). The School Board would give teachers permission to take extended absences for certain reasons; a year of study, to regain health, however if she were to openly take this year to bear a child she would be charged with neglect of duty and immediately dismissed (Young, 1914, p. 30). The discrimination of women in the school district was not only in New York City but increasingly around the country school boards were using discretionary powers in terms of the married teacher. The school districts in the union were making decisions about married women teachers as far as appointment to position, retention, and dismissal.

The Victorian ideal of the time in America was one where the woman was a wife, a mother and in charge of the domestic duties. "...Victorian sexual and marital ideology which celebrated the doctrine of separate spheres, the sentimental image of motherhood and the cult of domesticity that envisioned the home as a 'haven in a heartless world'" (Battan, 2004, p. 603). The Victorian Age moralists had a long standing belief that a woman's sexual drives were much weaker than those of a man's furthermore women's sexual impulses were purely driven by maternal instinct and spirituality. The Free Lovers challenged these ideals and believed that women should express their sexual desires and longings. In 1897 the Free Lovers argued that

women should no longer be seen as the “moral regulator” of the home and family and should be recognized as having equal sexual desires, needs and impulses as men (Battan, 2004, p. 604).

Battan (2004) goes on to say on the subject:

Women, like men, were equally entitled to gratify their sexual desires in the most beneficial and pleasurable way possible. By resisting Victorian culture’s emphasis on women’s sexual self-denial, Free Lovers such as Lillie D. White redefined the ideal woman by replacing virtues such as ‘obedience, submission, and chastity’ with newer ideals that allowed her to be self-reliant, assertive, and sexually and emotionally fulfilled (p. 604).

The Free Lovers aimed to redefine the definition of what society viewed as sexual morality. “In redefining sexual morality the Free Lovers resisted efforts to stigmatize the behavior of sexually active women that increased by the end of the nineteenth century. A woman’s sexual virtue, then, was a subjective condition, measured only from the perspective of the woman herself. Society’s judgments were irrelevant...No woman is ruined unless she thinks so” (Battan, 2004, p. 604). They did not believe that women should remain in loveless, abusive or unequal marriages and they also argued that women had the right to say yes as well as no to sexual relations with their husbands. (Battan, 2004, p. 604).

There had been a shift at this time in the attitudes, desires and lives of women in the United States and abroad that influenced the emergence of what historical literature refers to as the “New Woman.” The “New Woman” was coming in to challenge the sense of her predecessor the “True Woman” at the turn of the century. (True Women) were “Those mothers who nurtured their daughters, imbued them with family values, but also encouraged them to want more than life at home for themselves” (Geller & Harris, 1994, p. 89). The “New Woman” was historically defined as an educated, community minded intellectual young woman who was involved in activities outside her home and family. The “New Woman” was a model for women who sought to make a life more autonomous than her mother’s. This type of woman could think

about pursuing different alternatives to her life. Women's colleges emerged, and the medical establishment became nervous about women's ability to make a domestic haven for a family because of their new found education. Geller and Harris (1994) point to the emergence of New

Women and education:

Perhaps the one even that symbolized the emergence of the New Woman into society was the founding of women's colleges in the 1870's and 1880's. While it is true that these colleges offered opportunities for only a few women, they represented the movement of women into the larger society. By and large, the first generation of college women remained single or married late; they were actively choosing an independent, educated life over the more traditional choices made by their mothers. Such choices did not go unnoticed, however, by educators and by critics of women's education, causing the proponents of women's colleges to issue reassurances (p. 90).

Women's colleges assured the world they would prepare women accordingly; the president of Smith College "education for women would not make women less feminine; instead, it would render women better able to serve their families" (Geller & Harris, 1994, p. 90).

The college educated woman was getting a second chance in the eyes of America as the turn of the century began. Unlike her predecessor graduating in the years 1865-1890 who was seen as "mannish", the college girl of the turn of the century was depicted to be a "Gibson Girl," lively and healthy, an American Beauty (Gordon, 1987, p. 211). "The Gibson Girl was a modern woman, unencumbered by bustles or convention. The college girl was simply a type of Gibson Girl: lively, healthy, and energetic- part of the lifecycle of American womanhood" (Gordon, 1987, p. 211). Portraying the educated woman as a Gibson Girl allowed her to be a woman who went away to receive higher education *and* be socially accepted. Issues seemed to remain however; depicting young women in this light did not accurately depict college life or what came after. Gordon (1987) writes on the depiction of the Gibson girl/ college girl and what they faced at their time of graduation:

These women faced, at graduation, a new and unique problem: after college what? For some, attainment of higher education was the ultimate goal, and they had no thoughts



about the future. Others had clear career objectives, but encountered discrimination in their chosen fields. Still others went through periods of depression and made several false starts before finding themselves. Many found that a bachelor's degree did not release them from familial obligations, and they stayed at home as dutiful daughters, or as housewives or mothers (p. 214).

Part of the route to the discovery of the "New Woman" at the turn of the century was the dawn of the Feminist Movement. In a 1914 article an author asked her reader if they had heard the question "what is feminism?" roll into their home towns yet (Young, 1914, p. 679). The author, who was a female, explained that feminism had many different definitions; however what linked all of these definitions was the desire for higher education, economic opportunity, rights of person and property, political enfranchisement, all for women to be placed in importance (Young, 1914, p. 679). Young stressed the importance of answering the "woman question." At the time there were several questions about what makes a feminist. Was it solely a question of suffrage or were there set rules, a creed to swear by, or a set organization to join? Women were divided about the answer to the question of feminism; some felt the idea of feminism didn't mean enough and some felt it meant too much (Young, 1914, p. 680). Young posits the question of feminism to be a question for the female race. She writes the question is still an open one and that what is the most important part of the question is that women advocate for their own self-development. Another part that was being insisted upon by parts of the movement was "...feminism is headed toward the good of the race. All the women have got to come to it, whether they want to or not," (Young, 1914, p. 680).

Female university students were some of the women who were coming to the feminist movement, especially by way of the suffragist movement. Many of their residential college houses would sponsor political discussions about social issues, pass petitions for causes and the women students who attended the colleges worked in the community, and attended demonstrations. Women's colleges seemed more open to the "New Women" of the day. Here in

the single sex institution women students were more able to focus on their own self development, intellectual freedom and their faculty and classes (Gordon, 1987, p. 219). Feminists, social reformers and academics were struck with a new major being introduced that would challenge the very intellectual foundation that women's advocates were establishing for the past 50 years. Academia was introducing a new major to be known as sanitary science otherwise known as domestic science or family life. The major was explained as the professionalizing of child care and housework, the adaptation of home and family life to the modern era, and the homemaker's involvement in society and community (Gordon, 1987, p. 220). This major was mostly offered at co-educational institutions and was not mandatory for women, the single sex colleges did not readily pick up this curriculum. When the Progressive Era college educated women were graduating they often experienced society in an unfortunate way. The experience of the college education and life on campus taught women of the time all she needed to know about living life as well as any man did. What women graduates were finding after graduation was that society continued to expect domesticity from their lives. This expectation would be especially conflicting to the graduates who had participated in the social reforms of the time and were involved in the feminist movement. These graduates had different aspirations for their post graduate lives than marriage, family and domestics (Gordon, 1987, p. 226).

Women who had been tuning into the feminist movement, as some of the graduates mentioned above, had concerns that turned to encompass the efficacy of their lives and how feminism and their work in social reform had affected it. Young decried "Know yourselves! Be yourselves! Use yourselves!" in her 1914 article. The feminist of this time were driven by a sense of social efficiency and desire for truth and individuality. The ideals of feminism at this

time were indicating that the most efficient women would seek their own individuality with a sense of her own self and opportunity (Young, 1914, p. 684).

The vision of the woman that came before the “New Woman” is historically referenced as the “True Woman.” The “True Woman” was in need of protection because she was delicate, timid and mild. She was a woman who conformed to the needs of men, starting with her father, then husband then her son, should she be fortunate enough to bear one. She maintained a good and pure home for her husband and children; she was sweet and pious while taking on her domestic role with subservience and ease. A wife was a symbol of her husband’s economic position. She was to be ready and willing to give her life to domestics, be submissive, and at the pinnacle of her life would embody the phrase, “happy the woman who has no history” (Housman, 1917, p. 118). This ideal image of the “True Woman” often held a strong significance on the lives of impoverished women. The pressure for all women to present as a “True Woman” was great at this time and often when an impoverished woman fell ill with “insanity” men in the medical and psychiatric community believed the cause of this insanity to be from the poor woman’s lack of being able to be a real “True Woman” (Geller & Harris, 1994, p. 15). Similar pressures did not escape women of color, in a 1909 article published in *The Colored American Magazine* “club women” are called upon to organize around “colored girls with poor homes...poor, weak, misguided daughters of ill-starred mothers and of dissolute and indifferent father” (Williams, 1909, p. 652). Williams, a woman, asserts that the women and girls who have grown up in lesser situations need to be aided by organized and “sympathetic club women” so that they may not fall to be a simply “bad woman,” and with the help of women around her she may be lifted up and see opportunities and hope (Williams, 1909, p. 652).

As the role of the woman was being brought to the forefront of society's conscious over and over, the definitions continued to change. In a 1917 *Good Housekeeping* article, the author posits the question, "What is womanly?" (Housman, 1917, p. 53). The author of this article, a male, compares an old definition of an ideal woman to what the current definition of an ideal womanly woman is. Housman writes there are many people in society that will define womanly features as self-sacrificing, self-denying, yielding with sweet delight and with no delay. To which the author retorts "...those surely are the qualifications of the courtesan rather than the true woman" (Housman, 1917, p. 118). The ideal woman of this new era was to begin with *self-possession*. This ideal woman does not deny herself from her own comfort or nourishment in order for anyone else to indulge. Denying oneself decreases one's own ability to be an effective in their own social duty (Housman, 1917, p. 118). Feminist independence was defining the New Woman in a way in which self-efficacy was paramount.

Articles on women's roles shared several trends, one of the most evident being the notion of women's efficacy in society. In the 1917 "What is Womanly" article from *Good Housekeeping*, the author posits directly about a woman's efficacy, "Who can know the extent or the direction of woman's social effectiveness, which is another word for her womanliness..." (Housman, 1917, p. 118). At this crucial time in our nation's history women were questioning their roles as well as being questioned by society about what their roles were. A general tone of articles from the women's magazines had a questioning or instructional tone, asking women what their new role was or what their ideal of feminism was or even who they used to be. As the women's magazines, journals and papers asked women these questions, they were simultaneously given answers by the column writers who were both women and men; the answer at the turn of the century was almost always *efficiency=womanly*.

Just as Young asked the question “what is feminism?” Housman asked “what is womanly?” and there was certainly a pattern to the answers. The definition of feminism at this time in 1914 had its focus on a woman’s individual role, self-development, and how that development increased one’s own efficiency. A woman’s own efficiency would grow when joined with a society that was aligned with the same causes and concerns as she, and the bonds of this would be alive and would grow as the individuals grew and continued to work together and this group would in fact become most socially effective (Young, 1914, p. 682). Laurence Houseman (1917) asked what was womanly in 1917 in his *Good Housekeeping* article:

But to be quite sure of attaining full womanliness, woman must first make sure that she possesses herself. In the past men have set a barrier to her right of knowledge, to her right of action, to her right of independent being, but in the light of history I maintain that women will best discover what is womanly in its full value by insisting on right of knowledge, on right of experiment, on right of economic independence. And so by judging by past history it will be womanly, I think to break at whatever cost the conventions which limit the physical, mental or moral development of woman, or which put any hindrance in the way of her social efficiency...so long will it be her duty to look for opportunities of womanly activity rather in independence from than in submission to the generally accepted notion of womanliness (p. 118).

The President of Harvard University in the early 1920’s (1921) was noticing a changing in manners in his students and felt he needed to address the students he felt at fault for these changing behaviors, he addressed the Harvard Society of Dames. He felt that there was a weakening of the behaviors between young men and women and that it was the fault of the young women. If young women are receiving ill treatment from young men it was seen as their fault for accepting it and allowing the behaviors to take place (Eliot, 1921, p. 644). If young women do not demand the respect from young men they will not receive it, therefore young men will cease to have manners and young women will cease to be womanly, hence have the ability to grow up to be effective in society. President Eliot also felt strongly that if women entered the work force that they would be responsible for the extinction of the human race. He notes that

families sixty years ago were having 6 to 12 children and now that women are learning skills outside the home and becoming educated they are only having one, two or no children. “Of course the end of that condition is the extinction of our race...with the opening to women of occupations for which their strength does not suffice, if they are to bear children. That is the most serious point of view concerning sex relations in the future of American stock” (Eliot, 1921, p. 649).

In terms of women’s efficiency and careers outside of the home there were specific guidelines for what types of women, in terms of status, were able to work. Women were able to have the career of a teacher; however at this time in our nation’s history it was illegal for a mother to be a teacher in the public school districts (Young, 1914, p. 32). In 1914 the Supreme Court passed a law that women teachers could marry, however could not bear children while teaching, in addition the New York School Board issued an order that the superintendent of schools should “list all the women who had had children in 1913” (Young, 1914, p. 32). Single women had a duty to society and were to be of service to their families. They were to be efficient in society, which was to work and make money in order to be of service to their parents and siblings (Young, 1914, p. 28).

It was expected that women would step up and be a part of the war effort as the United States readied itself to join Europe in WWI. Women were expected to be a vital and effective part of society to aid in the war effort on the home front. There was an expectation that they be useful and perform a role outside the home that would be more efficient to society on the whole. As for the “fussy old maid” type of woman, it was as if this call to service was a gift to her. “...happiness lies in service.” Wilhelm informs his readers that bringing the unmarried woman into the factory was a perfect fit, this type of woman had no place before and now she had a

special place- she was a very effective worker, she was good at being an inspector on the line and making sure everything was perfect, the old maid was perfectly happy and now she was finally effective (Wilhelm, 1917, p. 143).

## Perception

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1887) wrote during this time about her first hand experiences:

My mind was not fully clear as to whether I should or should not marry. On the one hand I knew it was normal and right in general, and held that a woman should be able to have marriage and motherhood, and do her work in the world also. On the other, I felt strongly that for me it was not right and that the nature of the life before me forbade it, that I ought to forego the more intimate personal happiness for complete devotion to my work (p.161).

Gilman did marry and have a child and fell “sick and remained so all day,” (Geller & Harris, 1994, p. 161). Gillman was diagnosed at this time with a new disease called “nervous prostration” which some referred to as another term for laziness of a woman who had all of the comforts and did not use her will to push through her desire to be in a different place, have less misery, decrease her feelings of melancholy, serve her husband more fully, have children, be more independent etc. (Geller & Harris, 1994, p. 163). As women’s roles were changing at the turn of the century the perceptions by society of them were having a more difficult time changing with their roles. Charlotte Perkins Gilman had different ideas for her role and was perceived as mentally ill for her desires. Many women were changing roles as discussed previously and were sometimes harshly judged by society for moving into new roles.

The perception of the educated woman and the appropriate place, role, attitude, post graduate life of as well as campus life of was a popular commentary for Americans at the turn of the century. Americans preferred to perceive young college women to have a college experience that was frivolous and playful not serious and academic. It was troubling for society to acknowledge that female students were seriously studying the same subjects as men like

medicine and education because the perception was studying these subjects was dangerous to a woman's reproductive health (Gordon, 1987, p. 213). Female students and society at large were haunted by the perception that they would be culturally and socially "unsexed" because of their higher educations (Gordon, 1987, p. 213).

Some of the perceptions of the women at the turn of the century were coming from women themselves. Women who were mothers of New Women perceived their daughters changing roles in negative ways. Some of the mothers of the New Women, the young women who were off at college, becoming involved in feminism and social reform were themselves still in the mindset of the traditional domestic True Woman. The women's magazines at the time were unabashedly urging young women to major in home economics as well as for colleges and universities to adopt the programs. Some people who perceived changing women negatively were academic women themselves. The face of academia had changed from strictly education to an entire life experience which society perceived as sometimes deplorable (Some College Girl Follies, 1909, p. 239). Young women having a campus life experience were seen as having too extravagant of dress, carelessness when it came to their health, and a lack of preparation for adult life (Some College Girl Follies, 1909, p. 239). There were remarks threatening the normalcy of women who came out of college not knowing how to cook or use a stove, these were seen as women who higher education had failed (Gordon, 1987, p. 219). In a *New York Times* article from 1900 a young "bachelor girl" is the center of attention telling the story of a young woman who takes a job in New York City and prepares to take up "the bachelor girl's burdens." The young woman is the only one of her friends not married, and declares she stays with her married friends "trying on" domestic life until it becomes "contagious" and she is wearing a diamond by the end of the article (Bachelor Girl's Summer, 1900, para 3).



In a 1917 article a “normal girl” is defined as one who loves “beauty, poetry, music and romance” (Comstock, 1917, p. 51). This normal girl was also perceived in the article to have an emotional, dream and wish self and a need to safely express these selves lest she find them in an obscure and perverted place. This girl was a teen; she was learning and dreaming she specifically was perceived by this female author to need to be immersed in art and music in order to tend to her overflow of emotions. She is to enroll in a design school for college. The author urged mothers/ readers to request home design courses in high schools so young women could begin their helpful domestic skills earlier, she also notes these young women will *never, of course* be professional designers (Comstock, 1917, p. 52). Women would also never be fit for a mature life if they continued to experience college life according to many mothers, faculty and society at large (Some College Girl Follies, 1909, p. 240). It was a perception that the new college life was unfit for young women to excel to a mature life afterwards. Women were increasingly experiencing such exhaustion from their full lives on campus that they were unfit for poise needed to carry them through to a successful mature womanhood (Some College Girl Follies, 1909, p. 240). These young women who had been experiencing the unfettered excitement and constant over-stimulation of campus life could not expect this sort of life in marriage and childrearing and society was concerned. “The girl of today is the homemaker and mother of tomorrow...” (Some College Girl Follies, 1909, p. 240).

Perception of women at this time and the way in which the primary source articles depicts the subject shows a specific trend across the majority of the articles. The trend eerily reverberates throughout the articles. Societal perceptions that were projected on to women and their lives were not restricted to their public selves, these perceptions crept inside to the private domain as well and women were judged harshly for their choices. Many of their choices about

their changing roles were perceived as sick and their new desires for independence labeled as a pathology, in some cases women were diagnosed with nervous diseases popular for the time and sometimes even put away in an asylum just as Charlotte Perkins Gilman was.

### Challenges

For many women during the turn of the century feeling at odds with the female role caused a “maddening” experience and often not conforming to society's expectations left the women of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century evaluated for the asylum (Chesler, 1972, p. 15). Chesler points to the desire of women during this historical period for some women to not marry and not have children, instead desiring to pursue a different kind of life. In many cases women were following the societal norms of the time of marriage, and children, however, when they sought independence in ways that they felt just they were sent off by their husbands, fathers, brothers, neighbors or friends (Geller and Harris, 1994, p. 180).

Some women may have wanted to write poetry or explore the arts as Charlotte Perkins Gilman did; however when these desires prevailed, women who chose to act on their desires were often seen as “mad.” During the 1800’s the expectation of women was to follow societal cues, marry, take care of her husband and home and bear children and then take care of them. The writer argues that many aspects of society still view women’s roles this way today and will further explore this in Chapter IV. When women did not do this it became an issue of concern. As Chesler (1972) pointedly remarks on this specific notion “They cannot survive as just ‘women,’ and they are not allowed to survive as human or creative beings” (p. 31).

A book review published in 1909 tackled some aspects of this very subject. The author of the book being reviewed had a theory about marriage which was women, after years of being subjected to the servitude of man, in thought and action, were degraded in their souls and

therefore accepted the position of their condition (Goodwin, 1909, p. 633). The definition of marriage in terms of the review was seen as the commodity that women had to trade. As women were expected to marry and bear children, the author of this book felt that women were shut off from occupation to make a living besides marriage and childrearing therefore what they could trade was marriage (Goodwin, 1909, p. 633). Marriage seemed the only socially acceptable way to secure food, shelter, and clothing and she will spend her days toiling, rearing, and in servitude to her husband in order to secure what she needs. "...as a breeding machine and an adjunct to a frying pan" (Hamilton, 1909).

In an address made by Harvard University President to the Society of Dames in 1921, the question of the extinction of the race was at the forefront. President Eliot posits that the women of the university will in fact be the cause of the extinction of the race. It was believed that if women were permitted to join the higher ranks of the workforce and work alongside of men in the occupations that they did not have access to fifty years ago (doctors, philosopher, lawyer), that they would no longer see themselves fit to bear children and therefore they would cause the extinction of the human race (Eliot, 1921, p. 649).

Women had been working on the challenge of financial independence and economic freedoms at the turn of the century. Women were expected to mobilize during WWI to aid in the war effort and with that had gone to work in industry. Many women had stayed on, continued working and enjoyed the economic freedoms that work outside the home had given them (Wilhelm, 1917, p. 45). Working did delay marriage for some women and for some women it delayed childbearing or affected how many children they had (Eliot, 1921, p. 649). President Eliot seemed dismayed about his findings of the previously mentioned information, he mentions in his speech that women were having fewer children than 12, and that was a sign that women

were on a wrong path as far as working outside the home. He writes about families of two or less children and the fear of the extinction of the race by women entering the workforce, being financially independent and delaying their duty to marry and bear children (Eliot, 1921, p. 649). While men like Harvard's President Eliot felt women should be at home bearing up to 12 children, there was another reality taking place for women who had mobilized in the war effort. Women had gone to work and were getting some economic power, which Wilhelm felt would lead to a "new birth of freedom for the earth" (Wilhelm, 1917, p. 144). How would this economic freedom and power lead to challenging women?

Patterns and trends that surface from the challenge section of primary sources are pressure related. The articles site the tone of pressure that women were under from several avenues. These pressures were happening to women of all ages and women who were black and white. There were pressures to care for family, duty to the country, a pressure to care for self- vanity, a duty to be intelligent but not more than one's husband, raise children with appropriate skills and morals, and take care of house, home, children and husband. Outside of the home women dealt with the pressure of society's fear of their changing roles which caused major challenges. Women attended university and were pressured to enroll in only the "women's curriculum," which would teach them the science of the home. A number of sources pointed to a significant pressure from society noting how important it was for women to join the workforce and contribute and conversely other sources blaming women for threatening the extinction of the human race by joining the workforce. The challenges that women faced at this time inside and outside the home were full of pressure as well as conflicting messages.

Mental Health Needs / Supports

The dramatically changing roles, societal perceptions, and challenges that women were facing at the turn of the century in the United States gave way society's fledgling emergence of nervous diseases and thus a need for mental health treatment for women. At this time there were issues of mental health that were coming to the forefront of American culture and these issues were being named as they were emerging. Many illnesses were ones that doctors believed had to do with a person's nerves.

A 1909 article sites "nervous breakdowns" as a common occurrence that could also be easily avoided if the individual conducted themselves properly (Putnam, 1909, p. 594). Doctors at the turn of the century believed that when people, especially women, got on edge, was the fault of the "nerve-centers." Doctors would use machines called "tonometer's" to locate the place where the nerve centers where problematic (Williams, 1914, p. 186). Women were seen to fall apart at the slightest problem and thus were initially thought to have more actual nerves than men, upon realization that this was untrue, doctors thought women must then be more high strung (Williams,1914,p.186). Physicians at the turn of the century felt that women were more susceptible to illness of the nerves than men. Women (as well as "feminine men") would be diagnosed with the en vogue mental illnesses of the time which were nervous breakdown and neurasthenia. The most classic diagnosis for women who were exhibiting strange behaviors was hysteria and the most common treatment for unmarried women who received this diagnosis was to find a husband (Bianca, Cecilia, Giovanni, and Marangela, 2012).

Sigmund Freud began studying hysteria with Jean Martin Charcot in the late 1800's and then diverted from Charcot's thoughts on the disease. Charcot felt hysteria was a nerve disease not unlike multiple sclerosis, and Freud felt it had to do with the unconscious and an emotional conflict instead of a case of weak nerves (Bianca et al., 2012). One of Freud's most popular

works exploring hysteria was his analysis of a young woman whom he called “Dora.” Freud described Dora as a young woman who seemed to desire more from her own circumstances and was not pleased with her family. Dora’s mother was seen as suffering from an illness that Freud called “housewife’s psychosis” where the major symptom was to clean all day and be more concerned with obsessive cleaning than family (Freud, 1905, p. 14). Dora began suffering from physical illnesses when she was age eight and began seeing Dr. Freud at age eighteen. The initial symptoms in which she was seeking treatment from Freud were attributed to her nerves. Dora was experiencing coughing attacks that would last for weeks and sometimes months at a time, as well as the loss of her voice. Dora was initially treated for these somatic symptoms with hydrotherapy and local electricity to which no result was reached (Freud, 1905, p. 15).

At the turn of the century these treatments were typical. Hydrotherapy was a usual therapy for women suffering for nerves and hysterical symptoms. When women would have hydrotherapy treatments they would be assessed for what type of hydrotherapy treatment would best match their symptoms, as there were several types of baths one could be treated. Hydrotherapy could be administered in several different forms, sitz baths, scotch douche, shower, packs, and continuous baths (Bianca et al., 2012). In the United States electrotherapy was enjoying a comeback in the mid 1800’s. A neurologist named George Miller Beard began practicing electrotherapeutics in 1866 for nervous diseases. The patient would come daily or every other day for 10-20 minute sessions of electric currents that would flow through the patient’s entire body (Bianca et al., 2012).

When the usual treatments did not work Dora was brought to Freud by her father. There seems to be a second suspect reason Dora was brought to treatment, her father desires her to be brought to reason about thoughts she has about him and a relationship he has outside of his

marriage. In psychoanalysis with Freud, Dora expressed other symptoms of her hysteria that Freud attributed to an earlier trauma linked to something sexual.

In addition to hysteria being a popular diagnosis, neurasthenia was also a common nerve disease that women were diagnosed with at the turn of the century. This diagnosis would commonly present as exhaustion, inability to rest, acute pains, hypochondria, and an overall sense of ill-being (Williams, 1914, p. 188). Typical treatment for this diagnosis would be hydrotherapy, change of diet, drinking only water, stop working, and rest away from the life that has been making the woman worry. Sometimes it would be suggested that she go for a course of rest in the hospital, a prescribed bake in the special baking ovens, high frequency electric shock to sooth the muscles, hydrotherapy to enervate the tissues, or the use of a mechanical massage apparatus (Williams,1914, p. 188). Dr. Williams advises the readers of this article to avoid losing their nerves in the first place by keeping their nerves under control. He advises women to stop worrying about household issues and family issues, instructed women to trade in their housekeepers and husbands before trading in their nerves. Dr. Williams instructed women to “take control” of their nerves and environments so as not to lose their nerves, as well as teach their children and husbands to control their emotions, desires, passions (Williams,1914, p. 189). While Dr. Williams instructs women to teach her family to control their nerves he also sites that women have recently been included in the old maxim “As a man thinketh, so he is,” Dr. Williams elucidates that he believes women don’t actually think that well, and they should try to keep pace with the average man, however not surpass him because then they would not be an appropriate mate. All of this for the doctor to tell the reader that her brain is what she decides to make it, she is in charge of the level of maturity by way of the materials she reads, the company she keeps, and the topics she discusses (Williams,1914, p. 192).

Many at the time believed that one source of nervous diseases was because of inappropriate morals. Specifically, 'selfishness' was considered an indicator of low moral structure in women at the time. It was felt that selfishness was a cause for great difficulties in mental distress especially in the realm of one's nerves. Typically nervousness rooted in selfishness would cause symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and loss of interest, weeping, self-will and being obstinate. If a child was exhibiting these symptoms it was the mothers doing, if it was an adult woman it was due to lack of her own emotional restraint and absence of self-control (Bruce, 1916, p. 118). Two articles written about women with mental illness in *The New York Times* from the early 1900's focus on women who suffer because of a lack of men in their life. In a 1906 article an actress only identified as "Stuart Robson's sister" was said to have been suffering from being "crazed" and to have locked herself inside of her hotel room only to have been persuaded out by a false marriage proposal from Thomas Q. Seabrook, a comedian, and friend of her family and then taken to Bellevue Hospital (Actress Held the Fort, 1906, para 1). In another article written in 1915, a woman had been institutionalized for "melancholia" which was thought to be the direct result of the loss of her father. Her family placed her in a private sanitarium for ten years when she began to suffer from melancholy and they were hoping for a cure. The woman escaped and committed suicide (Maggie Dowty's Revenge, 1915, para 1).

Diseases of the nerves were not the only issues that women were warned with being most vulnerable of suffering from. As women became more liberal with higher education, suffrage, careers outside the home, and companionate marriage society continued to expect that women would be educated for both home and career and would work and then marry (Gordon, 1987, p. 225). By the early 1900's both medical and sociological writings would label single women as *deviant* and find them unfit to lead young women for fear that they would influence them in



deviant ways. Gordon (1987) discusses how women were continuously warned in higher education about the dangers of remaining single:

By the early 1900's, medical and sociological literature labeled singles women "deviant," criticizing their "lesbian tendencies" and unsuitability as guides for younger women. Single faculty and profession women thus made poor models for their students. Mt. Holyoke professor Carrie A. Harper explained why educated women no longer wished to emulate their teachers: "The reason is simple. We are not married. The world still tends to measure the success of a woman by her ability to attract a man sufficiently to make him marry her. The standard of the undergraduate does not differ from the world's standard." In a short appearing in *The Independent*, college students thought of their faculty as homely, pretty women. They identified, instead, with their "beautiful mothers," and one woman wore her mother's "bridal slippers" to commencement. Being single became an unhappy burden instead of a proud choice symbolizing the economic independence of the educated woman (p. 225).

The most notable trend in the primary source materials dealing with mental health was the source of the illness in the woman. There was not yet an understanding of a "bio-psychosocial" model, where all the components of one's life are assessed in order to understand the mental health diagnosis, instead at this time it was almost always seen as the fault of the person. At this time specifically most people who suffered with mental illness were women, therefore it was the fault of the women themselves, and the mental illness most likely would be seen as coming from her lack of self-control or emotional restraint. And tacitly, because of her interest in roles other than those prescribed by the culture of the time as house wife and mother. Clearly, the changing roles of women led them into a place of unacceptability, and mental health issues.

## CHAPTER IV

### Present Implications: Election 2012

This chapter explores the way in which women have been portrayed in this country's most recent Election in the fall of 2012. Both *Ms. Magazine* and *Ebony Magazine* are steeped in current political motivations as well as were founded on specific political underpinnings. *Ms. Magazine* began as a "one shot" insert in the *New York Magazine* in December of 1971. Subsequently the second wave of feminism movement parlayed into *Ms. Magazine* by way of two women who had been working in the movement for years. *Ebony Magazine* was founded November 1, 1945 by John H. Johnson and is currently under direction of Editor-in-Chief Amy D. Barnett. When the magazine began the goals were to "focus on the achievements of blacks from 'Harlem to Hollywood' and to 'offer positive images of blacks in a world of negative images'" In terms of a wide readership the sources that were examined were *Redbook* and the *New York Times*. *The New York Times* can essentially be accessed everywhere and through every device as of 2012 and according to the *Huffington Post* on-line edition, *Redbook Magazine* was the number one magazine for women at the start of 2012. *The New York Times* has been publishing daily papers since 1851. *Ladies Against Feminism* is a blog that takes a staunch religious stance on feminism it was founded in 2002 by Mrs. Lydia Sherman and Mrs. Jennie Chancy. This source can be similar to the other sources in this section because it covers the same topics of feminism, politics, women's roles, etc., however the take on these topics are decidedly motivated by religion. The articles have been examined according to similar

standards as the historical primary sources and have been collected by like categories of popular political current news story, differing opinions, and current women's issues. These primary source articles have also been chosen for the way in which they seem to "pull a thread" or harken back to the articles that were examined from the primary source articles at the turn of the century that were examined in Chapter III.

#### Political News Story 2012: Equal Pay for Women

As recently as the 2012 national election, it has become apparent that there are many similar threads in terms of our nation's perspectives on women throughout history. Many of the primary source articles that were examined for the period of time Election 2012 had similar themes reflective of how women are perceived in our culture. The theme of the articles was the GOP's "War on Women" or the Paycheck Fairness Act. Sources reviewed appeared to report about two prevalent themes whether they were mainly politically driven sources or wide spread readership sources. In the case of these articles and sources, all sources covered this topic except the blog *Ladies Against Feminism*. A 2012 article from *Ebony Magazine* sites the GOP's "War on Women" as a major reason for Senate Democrats to "fight back, pushing for the passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act (PFA) which is legislation that protects women who sue when they discover they are being paid less than their male counterparts (Maxwell, 2012, para 1). An article in *Ms. Magazine* on the same topic breaks down the pay inequities of women. "...making 77 cents on average for every dollar earned by men (just 62 cents for African American women and 54 cents for Latinas). Of those who work for only the federal minimum wage – a paltry \$7.25 an hour – two-thirds are women, and women are heavily represented in lower- paid service jobs such as retail and hospitality" (Baker, 2012, p. 27). An article on the same subject also appears in *Redbook Magazine*. This article is one of the few articles having to do with politics in this

magazine which according to the *Huffington Post* on-line edition was the number one magazine for women at the start of 2012. The title of the article seems to be begging an answer, “Are Women Really Worth Less Than Men?” This article takes the reader through the history of the Lilly Ledbetter Act and Obama’s passage of it on his first day in office. The article ends with helpful suggestions on how to talk to bosses about getting fair and equal pay (Palmer, 2012, closing para). President Obama was quoted in a *New York Times* article about the extent of equal pay for women, “This is not just a women’s issue. This is a family issue. This is a middle- class issue. And that’s why we’ve got to fight for it” (Hill, 2012). All of these articles pull a thread from the turn of the century. They harken back to the time discussed in Chapter III when women began to join the work force outside of their homes during the war effort. Having women work was not only necessary because many of the nation’s men were off at war, it was more lucrative for business, more women could work for less money (Wilhelm, 1917, p. 144). Clearly, as reflected by this thread between two very different times, the stresses associated with women’s earning potential seem to have remained essentially unchanged. Though much has been said about improvements over all for women, the fundamental earning condition seems to continue, as well as continues to contribute to stresses that women must live with and manage.

#### Differing Opinions 2012

Another area of continuing stress for women appears to be in the area of specific cultural realms and the stress that arises for women when cultures specify women to be “put on a pedestal” in one way or another. The stresses of living on that pedestal continue in this section of differing opinions. *Ladies Against Feminism* was examined in terms of a differing opinion. This primary source is a blog that takes a staunch religious stance on feminism and the editors say allows “thoughtful, biblical responses to feminism and to encourage other women in their

God-given roles.” (Chancy and Sherman, 2012, para 1). As mentioned above, this source does not have any articles concerning politics or women’s rights; in fact there is not a searchable subject tag for either of these subjects. There were articles that were chosen for their connections to similar subjects to other articles featured in this section as well as one’s that had a thread of connection to the articles examined in Chapter III. *Ladies Against Feminism* typically writes on subjects (found under the “feminism” searchable tab), that discuss a woman’s place in the world, which for all purposes have been chosen to be examined in this section due to their likeness to women’s issues. An article describing a woman’s place which is written by a man, “illustrates why robust biblical womanhood negates any ‘need’ for feminism” (Chancey, 2012, para 1). One of the blogs founders introduces the article by writing about how the whole family should be involved in the same day to day, to grow together and be a part of the same economy and same heart she goes on to say, “Today this is a radical way to approach life, but our ancestors prior to the Industrial Revolution lived it, breathed it, and built nations upon it. We can, too. What could be more empowering, freeing, or exciting?” (Chancey, 2012, para 2). Chancey’s words harken back practically directly to the description of the “True Woman” which was defined in Chapter III (Geller & Harris, 90). This specific article “A Woman’s place” by R.J. Rushdoony reveals not only a look into a religiously motivated community but also a different view of women and where this community believes women should be, how they should be and where it all went wrong in the history of the United States. “A legal ‘revolution’ brought about the diminished status of women; ‘the all too familiar view of women suddenly emerging in the nineteenth century from a long historical night or to a sunlit plain is completely wrong” (Rushdooney, 2003, para 3). Rushdoony goes on to opine about the feminist movement, “The tragedy of the women’s rights movement was that, although it had serious wrongs to correct, it

added to the problem, and here the resistance of man was in large measure responsible. Instead of restoring women to their rightful place of authority beside man, women's rights became feminism: it put women in competition with men. It led to the masculinization of women and the feminization of men, to the unhappiness of both" (Rushdooney, 2003, para 4).

## Women's Issues 2012

During the election in 2012 the candidates were weighing in on many causes, many of them having to do with women, women's rights, pay, issues, reproductive rights, healthcare, motherhood, abortions and several other subjects. While it is known that both candidates were male, one candidate had a platform that was working more strategically pro women's rights and the other against. In a 2012 article in *Ebony Magazine*, GOP Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney comes out about his beliefs on "poor moms" and what he thinks they should be doing. The article sites that Romney believes that "federally assisted stay-at-home moms should not be given a choice in how they choose to receive income" (Maxwell, 2012, para 3). Men believing women should have no choice about how they receive income, or about their lives in general harkens back to several articles from the turn of the century that were examined in Chapter III. Even the tone of the articles during the election of 2012 portrayed women and their rights in a "problematic" light. Several articles found in *The New York Times* that discussed the Republican Party described female voters and the gender gap that the political party seemed to be having. In the articles Republicans describe a "significant problem with female voters" as well as continuing to describe minority voters the same way and in another article saying "...the problem with female voters was..." (Seinhauer, 2012, para 7). Not only was the language of articles portraying women in a certain light, the articles themselves in several of the publications were found to discuss women's issues such as reproductive rights, health care access, equal pay,

gender gap in voting and representation, and many more in terms that almost seemed like bargaining chips. The articles state what will be enforced, what will be done to, what will be taken away from women, and phrases like “war on women” make strong ties to this nation’s history and the articles that were examined in Chapter III. The way in which women continue to be portrayed in some of these articles harken back to the turn of the century when the Suffragettes were fighting for rights and their voice to be heard, some of the articles from the Election 2012 continue in the pattern of pre- Amendment 19.

There were other articles, however, written during this time, mostly by women that did not share the tone written about above. These articles were mostly found in *Ms. Magazine* and *Ebony Magazine*. *Ms. Magazine* dedicated the cover and an entire section of their quarterly published magazine to the 2012 Election. In this coverage of the election the magazine included a two page ballot initiative and referenda educational rundown for issues that affect women’s lives. The educational article was also a powerful suggestion to aid in making feminist decisions at the poles as the magazine states “our recommendations on how to vote” (Baker, 2012, p. 36). The article is broken down into sections of policies that affect women’s lives (ex. Reproductive rights, health care, civil rights) and then spells out the ballot initiatives and referenda’s and then the *Ms.* Editors write how they suggest to vote. Other articles in this section include a who’s who in the House and Senate by race, gender, and party affiliation and another article on fighting voter suppression in the 2012 election. *Ebony Magazine* had two articles that focused on the victim blaming in the case of women being blamed for rape and sexual assault. In one article writer Zerlina Maxwell writes about the amount of public service announcement and public campaigns that solely target women teaching them how to avoid rape. She is calling for a new era in anti-rape campaigns that target men and boys. “Telling women that they can behave in a

certain way to avoid rape creates a false sense of security and it isn't the most effective way to lower the horrible statistics which show that 1 in 5 women will become victims of a completed or attempted rape in their lifetime. The numbers for African American women are even higher" (Maxwell, 2012, para 1). This sentiment pulls a strong thread from several articles examined in Chapter III. As well as this quote towards the end of the article, "For so long all of our energy has been directed at women, teaching them to be more 'ladylike' and not to be 'promiscuous' to not drink too much or to not wear a skirt" (Maxwell, 2012, closing para). These published perspectives show strong resemblance towards the sentiments that the articles examined in Chapter III were expounding about how women were seen as being responsible for nearly everything that happened to them. Essentially when examining primary sources from the turn of the century and election 2012 it was noted that women were and apparently are held to a different standard related to culture: that they seem to be held accountable for being responsible for their mental illness, possible extinction of the race, and any sexual assault or rape that 1 in 5 will suffer as well as many other responsibilities.



## CHAPTER V

### Discussion Remarks

The Purpose of this study was to examine the historical mental health needs that emerged for women at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of drastic changes in the tenor of the United States. In addition, I examined the ways in which the drastic changes of the country at the turn of the century shed some historical light and similarities on the changes that took place during the Presidential Election of 2012. I examined literature pertaining to women from 1890-1920 in the United States and related to four main topic areas as a way to examine major trends and patterns in mental health needs and supports at the time in history. There were four main topic areas that were examined in this historical discourse thesis study. The four main topic areas were women's changing roles, society's changing perceptions of women, challenges, and mental health needs and supports that emerged as a result of the three previous topics.

Chapter II provided a review of the key primary sources used to inform the study as well as presented the study plan. Each of the selected sources had its own set of values, and philosophical orientation, representing a spectrum of cultural reflections of the historical time in which they were popular. In order to gain a rounded, comprehensive understanding of the attitudes and perspectives of the time, examination of reflections about women's roles, status and mental health conditions was accomplished by reading articles across the spectrum of sources of the day. Because of their importance in contributing to this study, this chapter reviewed each of the primary sources in terms of a set of criteria that reflected its orientation. The specific criteria

that were used to examine the sources were; who began the source and a piece of their history, mission of the specific journal or paper, the political underpinnings, and the target audience of the source. Each of the major sources were presented and described in terms of these criteria. In Chapter IV, I explored the ways in which women have been portrayed in this country's most recent Presidential Election. These sources were examined similarly to the previously mentioned criteria for Chapter II primary literature. In addition the specific sources were chosen for the way in which they pulled a thread or harkened back to the examined articles from Chapter II.

Chapter III explored the patterns and trends found in the sources that were examined in Chapter II in order to define the evidence of how women were perceived by the U.S. culture of the time. Further, the chapter provided a sense of women's needs at this specific time in our nation's history. Articles describing women's roles, challenges, perceptions and mental health needs and supports at the turn of the century in America were sourced from The Sophia Smith Archives collection at Smith College Library as well as other archival collections.

In light of the in depth examination and exploration of the literature from the turn of the century America as well as the 2012 Presidential Election, there are connections that can be made in terms of women's roles, challenges, societal perceptions and mental health needs and supports. The way in which the primary sourced literature was examined for both time periods allowed for a thoughtful exploration of evaluation of the way in which women have been living, portrayed, challenged and ultimately how their mental health supports or lack of have been affected by the perceptions and pressures of our societal culture.

As the historical literature was examined parallel to the literature from the 2012 Presidential Election, an increasing amount of similarity began to emerge between the two time periods and the ways in which primary sourced literature discussed women. I began to discover

what I had initially pondered about the threads that would be pulled from the past to the present. One of my most major motivations for this project was my own feminism, curiosity and love of history. Working in the archives gave me a way to work with primary sources and discover the voices of women from America's history as well as begin to shed light on thoughts that I had about the treatment of women that continues to unfold today. To be honest, because of the emphasis on women's equality and rights from the 1950's on, I didn't anticipate that there would be as many similarities between women's lives as reflected in popular media from the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and today. However, to my great surprise, it appears very little of substance has actually changed! I would like to point to an example on "blame" from a historical primary source and a present day primary source. Harvard's President Eliot (1921) spoke to the Society of Dames about their loosening of manners:

I also notice that young women now-a-days expect to encounter rudeness from young men, and that they don't much resent it. Young women do not seem to resent gross misconduct toward them from their male associates. You have all known young women to be seized upon during a dance by intoxicated men, under the new custom called 'cutting in.' That course of offensive conduct on the part of young men is not adequately resented either by the young women or their mothers (p. 644)

In an article from *Ebony Magazine*, columnist Zerlina Maxwell (2012) writes on the importance of ceasing victim blaming:

Telling women that they can behave in a certain way to avoid rape creates a false sense of security and it isn't the most effective way to lower the horrible statistics which show that 1 in 5 women will become victims of a completed or attempted rape in their lifetime. Our community, much like society-at-large, needs a paradigm shift as it relates to our sexual assault prevention efforts. For so long all of our energy has been directed at women, teaching them to be more 'ladylike' and to not be 'promiscuous' to not drink too much or to not wear a skirt (para.1 & 4).

Although these sources were published over ninety years apart I believe they are portraying women in a similar light, a light where they are to blame for what happens to them. As more of Chapter III and Chapter IV unfolded it was more clear to me how the literature was able to elucidate my own feelings as a woman in today's society.

In terms of weaknesses of this methodology I would have to sight some of my own blind spots within my researching. I realized my initial method of collecting the primary historical sources was leading me towards mainstream “ladies magazines” which were for white women by white men (and some white women). As my research went on I suddenly realized that I was lacking women of color and began that historical research, finding different historical primary sources altogether. I realize that there are many other groups of women who are left out of this study i.e. immigrant women, lesbian women, disabled women, Asian women, religious women, as well as different socioeconomic classes of women.

It has certainly been an interesting, significant, relevant and experiential journey to work on this topic. It has continued to inform my own practice with individual as well as group clients throughout the placement year, reigniting my feminist roots and bringing feminist theory to the forefront of my work with clients as well as inform discussions with friends and loved ones. The implication of this study in terms of clinical social work practice is the importance familiarity with historical events as well as present events. Although there have been improvements in the treatment of women in the field of mental health, more availability in general and somewhat diminished stigma, this study highlighted some of the ways in which independence, sexuality and gender have continued to be pathologized in women. Through the research I have completed for this historical discourse analysis the importance of our history has proved itself to be an important key to our present and future health, treatments and understanding of ourselves and women we work with. It is with this sentiment that I would encourage clinicians to delve into the historical treatments of the populations they are working with as it will give us the key to understanding our present and future treatments as well as how to improve them and advocate. Resonating with the primary source articles from these two significant periods of time when lives

of women, their changing roles, challenges, the societal perceptions of them and they way in which all of these aspects greatly affected the way in which they were supported or pathologized has been a powerful experience for me as a woman, a social worker who works with women, a daughter, a sister and a friend.

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