

**A SOCIAL HISTORY OF
WOMEN AND CYCLING
IN LATE-NINETEENTH CENTURY
NEW ZEALAND**

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of
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Clare S. Simpson

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MEMORANDUM

The Academic Registrar
Lincoln University

This is to certify that this thesis entitled:

A Social History of Women and Cycling in Late
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In the final decade of the nineteenth-century, when New Zealand women began riding the bicycle, they excited intense public debate about contemporary middle-class ideals of femininity. The research question posed is: "why did women's cycling provoke such a strong outcry?"

Three nineteenth-century cycling magazines, the *New Zealand Wheelman*, the *New Zealand Cyclist*, and the *New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, were examined, along with numerous New Zealand and British contemporary sources on women's sport and recreation, etiquette, femininity, and gender roles.

The context of the late-nineteenth century signifies a high point in the modernisation of Western capitalist societies, which is characterised in part by significant and widespread change in the roles of middle-class women. The bicycle was a product of modern ideas, designs, and technology, and eventually came to symbolise freedom in diverse ways. The dual-purpose nature of the bicycle (*i.e.*, as a mode of transport and as a recreational tool) enabled women to become more physically and geographically mobile, as well as to pursue new directions in leisure. It afforded, moreover, increasing opportunities to meet and socialise with a wider range of male acquaintances, free from the restrictions of etiquette and the requirements of chaperonage. As a symbol of the 'New Woman', the bicycle graphically represented a threat to the proprieties governing the behaviour and movements of respectable middle-class women in public.

The debates which arose in response to women's cycling focused on their conduct, their appearance, and the effects of cycling on their physical and moral well-being. Ultimately, these debates highlighted competing definitions of nineteenth-century middle-class femininity. Cycling presented two dilemmas for respectable women: how could they cycle and retain their respectability? and, should a respectable woman risk damaging herself, physically and morally, for such a capricious activity as cycling? Cyclists aspired to reconcile the ignominy of their

conspicuousness on the bicycle with the social imperative to maintain an impression of middle-class respectability in public.

The conceptual framework of Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective is used to interpret the nature of heterosocial interactions between cyclists and their audiences. Nineteenth-century feminine propriety involved a set of performances, with both performers (cyclists) and audiences (onlookers) possessing shared understandings of how signals (impressions) ought to be given and received. Women on bicycles endeavoured to manage the impressions they gave off by carefully attending to their appearances and their behaviour, so that the audience would be persuaded to view them as respectable, despite the perception that riding a bicycle in public was *risqué*. In this way, women on bicycles attempted to redefine middle-class femininity.

Women on bicycles became a highly visible, everyday symbol of the realities of modern life that challenged traditional gender roles and nineteenth-century formality. Cycling for New Zealand women in the 1890s thus played a key part in the transformation of nineteenth-century gender roles.

Key words: bicycle, conspicuousness, etiquette, femininity, gender, Goffman, heterosociability, history, modernisation, New Woman, New Zealand, performance, propriety, public, recreation, role, sport, transport, women.

*"As the dainty wheel gives her a larger
world to live and move in, so the wheel of progress
has now given her a larger world to think in."*

New Zealand Wheelman, 14 October 1893, 4.

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CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	v
List of Figures	ix
List of Abbreviations	x
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION	1
Previous Research in Women and Sport History	2
New Zealand Literature	2
International Literature	6
Primary Sources	14
Periodicals and Newspapers	14
Books and Articles	16
Other Primary Sources	19
Scope of the Study	21
Nineteenth-Century Modernity	23
Women's Presence and Mobility in Public	28
Duality of Bicycles: Transport and Recreation	34
The Medical Debates About Female Exercise	36
Women and Social Change	38
Research Objectives	42
CHAPTER 2 - WOMEN IN PUBLIC SPACE BEFORE 1890	43
The Presence of Women in Public	43
Conduct and Appearance	43
Heterosociability	48
Women and Mobility	53
Transport	53
Physical Activity	55
Cycling as a Male Activity	57
Conclusions	59
CHAPTER 3 - WOMEN'S CYCLING IN NEW ZEALAND	61
Early Bicycles for Women	61
First Arrivals, 1869	61
Affordability and Relative Costs of Cycles for Women	62
Marketing Bicycles to Women	63
Cycling as Transport and Recreation	65
The Popularity of Women's Cycling	66
An Alternative Means of Transport	69
Pursuit of a New Form of Recreation	74
Cycle Racing: A New Sporting Opportunity	81
Adventure Through Cycle Touring	85
Opportunities for Exercise and Health	92

Cycling to Make a Statement	95
The Problems and Practicalities of Cycling	98
The Perils	99
Mechanical Knowledge and Expertise	104
Conclusions	105
CHAPTER 4 - THE DEBATES ABOUT WOMEN'S CYCLING	107
Feminine Dilemmas For Cycling Women	109
Making the Right Impressions	112
Issues of Appearance	114
Issues of Conduct	119
Redefining and Communicating New Signals of Female Respectability ...	122
"Masculinisation" of Women	124
Issues About Manly Appearances	125
Issues About Manly Behaviour	137
Cycling and the Ideology of the New Woman	139
Conclusions	142
CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION: THE ACCEPTANCE OF WOMEN'S CYCLING	143
Recapitulation of the Argument	143
Women's Presence in Public	144
Contesting Definitions of Femininity	144
Transforming Gender Roles, Changing Femininity	146
Abstract Generalisability	147
Collective Representation	157
Conclusion	159
Appendix	
New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club	163
Bibliography	166

FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. A Velocipede, c. 1870	10
2. Inventory of Nineteenth-Century Feminine Attributes	29
3. Advertisement for 'Cleveland' Bicycle, 1899	65
4. South Island Cycle Touring Map	89
5. North Island Cycle Touring Map	90
6. Inventory of Conventional Nineteenth-Century Feminine Attributes	113
7. Gendered Messages in Victorian Dress	114
8. Ladies' Convertible Bicycling Skirt	118
9. 'New Women' in the Bois du Boulogne, c. 1900	141

ABBREVIATIONS

NZC	<i>New Zealand Cyclist</i>
NZCTCG	<i>New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette</i>
NZJH	<i>New Zealand Journal of History</i>
NZGLJ	<i>New Zealand Graphic and Ladies' Journal</i>
NZM	<i>New Zealand Mail</i>
NZW	<i>New Zealand Wheelman</i>
OW	<i>Otago Witness</i>
RDSG	<i>Rational Dress Society's Gazette</i>
WR	<i>White Ribbon</i>

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the final decade of nineteenth-century New Zealand, for women to take up cycling was a controversial act. It excited, moreover, considerable public debate about contemporary middle-class ideals of feminine conduct and behaviour. As more women rode bicycles during the 1890s, controversy shifted away from their ability and right to ride and focused instead on *how* they should ride: what to wear, with whom to ride, where to ride, whether or not to race, whether or not it was good for their health, complexion, hair, their families, their morality or their reputations. On reading two nineteenth-century cycling magazines, the *New Zealand Wheelman* and the *New Zealand Cyclist*, I was struck by the force of the views expressed both in support of and in opposition to women's cycling. I wondered why a simple activity like riding a bicycle should excite such strong feelings. I pondered this question as I re-read the magazines and, at the conclusion of my research, agreed with other sports historians who have looked at cycling: the bicycle played a key role in highlighting contested definitions of nineteenth-century femininity. But issues concerning femininity were debated in other ways in the nineteenth century, for example in medical discourse, as well as in education and politics. What, then, was unique about the role the bicycle played in these debates? The answer, I will argue, lay in its nature as a dual-purpose machine: as a mode of transport, it enabled large numbers of women from all sectors of society to become more mobile and independent; as a recreational tool, the bicycle enabled women to pursue new directions in their leisure and sport. Ultimately, the bicycle made so-called respectable women conspicuous in public, the flagrancy of which kindled an outcry about how respectable women should behave.

The many rich and varied experiences of women's past in New Zealand are still largely unexplored. It is only in the last twenty years that a significant number of historians in New Zealand have made women the central focus of their research, and only very recently that women's sporting history has gained any prominence. This study of women and cycling in late-nineteenth century New Zealand opens up new ground, recovering materials pertinent to New Zealand women's history, bringing together archival materials of different kinds for the first time and analysing them from a feminist historical and sociological perspective. This research also represents a growing interest in women's physical recreation and sporting past, and a personal interest in how femininity is constructed and contested at a given point in time and place.

* * * * *

This introductory chapter will examine existing scholarly research in women's sports history, both in New Zealand and internationally, highlighting the dominant themes and issues arising in that field. The chapter also discusses the sources used for this research and the assumptions made about them, before examining the two distinctive features of women's cycling: women's mobility in the public arena; and the duality of the bicycle as both a mode of transport and an object for recreation. The context of this study, the late-nineteenth century, signifies a high point in the modernisation of Western capitalist societies, which is characterised, in part, by significant and widespread change in the roles of women. Modernisation and women's social change will be therefore addressed in the final section of this chapter.

The remaining chapters of this study are arranged to examine chronologically what happened before, during, and after the time at which women's cycling peaked in popularity, around the mid-1890s. To this end Chapter 2, "Women in Public Space Before 1890," examines the conventions which guided women's public presentation of self. This chapter also examines the idea of 'mobility', as it relates to transport and to physical activity. Chapter 3, "Women's Cycling in New Zealand," documents the introduction and development of women's cycling during the 1890s. Chapter 4, "The Debates About Women's Cycling," identifies and investigates the controversies surrounding women's cycling. These debates broadly address issues of nineteenth-century femininity in terms of women's public appearance and conduct, and show how cycling threatened not only to modify what was considered respectable femininity, but to so radically alter women's gender identity that they became 'masculinised'. Finally, Chapter 5, "Conclusion: The Acceptance of Women's Cycling," concludes the research by examining and accounting for the demise of the controversies discussed throughout.

Previous Research in Women and Sport History

In this discussion of the secondary sources, I move beyond the cycling and sport literature to encompass material significant for interpreting the themes which emerged from the primary sources.

New Zealand Literature

New Zealand women's sport has rarely been the focus of historical research, although there is a growing interest in the area. Consequently, an extensive range of searches was used to locate

relevant literature, including bibliographies, indices, and union lists of theses.¹ The following review of existing literature is divided into three categories to provide a framework for examining New Zealand women's sports history: New Zealand cycling history; sports history which focuses on women; and sports histories in which there is reasonable coverage of women.

Cycling history records in New Zealand are insubstantial and deficient, and searches revealed no scholarly New Zealand cycling histories. Although cycling is briefly mentioned in some sports history dissertations (*e.g.*, Crawford, 1984; Howat, 1970), only two works mentioned both women and cycling. Hammer's thesis includes a brief discussion of women and cycling in the context of dress reform, while Barclay's research essay emphasises the role of cycling in relaxing the social restrictions placed upon women.²

Academic research in New Zealand women's sports history is embryonic, but the range of topics represented so far in this field is broad. Hammer's research exemplifies the most extensive coverage of sporting activities, and her study is also the most analytical, highlighting the role of sport in providing both increased opportunities and motivation for women to be more

1. Ann M. Burgin, "Women's Societies in New Zealand: A Bibliography of their Publications" (Wellington: Library School, 1965); D. L. Jenkins, comp., *Union List of Theses of the University of New Zealand 1910-1954* (Wellington, 1956); Catherine Swift and Jean Strachan, comps., *Union List of Higher Degree Theses in New Zealand Libraries. Supplement no. 4. 1971-1975* (Wellington: New Zealand Library Association, 1976); Catherine G. Swift, comp., *Union List of Higher Degree Theses in New Zealand Libraries. Supplement no. 5. 1976-1978* (Wellington: New Zealand Library Association, 1980); John Cochrane, comp., *Union List of Higher Degree Theses in New Zealand Libraries. Supplement no. 6. 1979-1982* (Wellington: New Zealand Library Association, 1984); Jeff Kirkus-Lamont, comp., *Union List of Higher Degree Theses in New Zealand Libraries. Supplement no. 7. 1983-1985* (Wellington: New Zealand Library Association, 1989); Jeff Kirkus-Lamont, comp., *Union List of Higher Degree Theses in New Zealand Libraries. Supplement no. 8. 1986-1989* (Wellington: New Zealand Library Association, 1993); Jean Klemp, comp., *Union List of Higher Degree Theses in New Zealand Libraries. Supplement no. 9. 1990-1992* (Wellington: New Zealand Library Association, 1993); Diana Meads, Philip Rainer, and Kay Sanderson, *Women's Words: A Guide to Manuscripts and Archives in the Alexander Turnbull Library Relating to Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Wellington: National Library of New Zealand, 1988); Margaret D. Rodger and K. A. Pickens, comps., *Theses on the History of New Zealand* (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1968-1972); Norah Mosen, comp., *Theses on the History of New Zealand. Supplement 1968-1982* (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1985); Patricia Sargison, *Victoria's Furthest Daughters: A Bibliography of Published Sources for the Study of Women in New Zealand, 1830-1914* (Wellington: National Library of New Zealand with the New Zealand Founders Society, 1984); Clare Simpson, *Women and Recreation in Aotearoa / New Zealand: An Annotated Bibliography*, Occasional Paper no. 2 (Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, Lincoln University, 1991); Rex Thompson, comp., *O.U.S.P.E. Special Studies Index* (School of Physical Education, University of Otago, 1981).

2. S. A. G. M. Crawford, "A History of Recreation and Sport in Nineteenth Century Colonial Otago" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Queensland, 1984); Peter Howat, "A History of Sport and Recreation in Westland, 1890-1905" (Special study, School of Physical Education, University of Otago, 1970); Crawford and Howat mention men's cycling only; Margaret Hammer, "'Something Else in the World to Live For': Sport and the Physical Emancipation of Women and Girls in Auckland" (M.A. thesis, University of Auckland, 1990); Jenny Barclay, "An Analysis of Trends in New Zealand Sport From 1840-1900" (B.A.(hons) research essay, Massey University, 1977).

physically active.³ A collection of essays about women and sport, contributing to a book about New Zealand women's organisations, has also produced a broad picture of women's sporting past.⁴ An introductory essay in this volume by Charlotte Macdonald provides an excellent historical overview of women's sporting activities from the colonial period to 1992. It is followed by several smaller essays, each of which relies substantially on primary sources, and covers cycling, hockey, golf, netball, cricket, marching, bowling, and climbing.⁵ The remainder of the scholarly literature on women's sporting history encompasses early mountaineering, golf, physical education, and athletics. An attempt has been made in each of these studies to generate explanations for the nature of women's participation in these activities but, with one exception, these analyses are generally atheoretical.⁶

More prevalent are accounts of women's sports which are submerged in, or tagged on to, general sporting histories or general histories of women. The most informative sport and recreation histories can be found in works by Jenny Barclay, Scott Cr wford, Fiona Hall, Andrew Martin, and Bob Stothart. In each of these studies, the theme of sport as an emancipatory factor for women was signalled, but not developed with any persistence or rigour.⁷ Four other historical studies featured women's sport and helped to inform this research. Although written for popular readership, Sandra Coney's study of the Auckland Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) is an extensive social history of an organisation strongly associated with girls' sport and recreation, covering the period 1885-1985. Serendipitously, my own M.A. thesis on the Christchurch YWCA 1883-1930 deals with how this significant institution used sport and recreation as a means to introduce young working-class girls to the

3. Hammer, 1990.

4. Anne Else, ed., *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand / Nga Ropu Wahine o te Motu* (Wellington: Historical Branch, Internal Affairs and Daphne Brasell Associates Press, 1993).

5. Charlotte Macdonald, "Organisations in Sport, Recreation and Leisure," *ibid.*, 405-10.

6. Pip Lynch, "A History of Women Mountaineers in Victorian New Zealand Society" (Special study, Faculty of Physical Education, University of Otago, 1985); Teresa G. Russell, "Grace and the Fairways: The History of New Zealand Ladies' Golf" (Special study, School of Physical Education, University of Otago, 1979); Geraldine Ryan, "Muscular Maidens': The Development of Sport and Exercise in Girls' Schools in New Zealand" (M.A. long essay, University of Canterbury, 1983); Pamela A. Trowbridge, "Athletics: Women's Status" (Special study, School of Physical Education, University of Otago, 1964); a more theoretical orientation can be found in Catherine Smith, "Control of the Female Body: Physical Training at Three New Zealand Girls' High Schools, 1880s-1920s," *Sporting Traditions: Journal of the Australian Society for Sports History* 13, no. 2 (May 1997): 59-71.

7. Barclay, 1977; Crawford, 1984; Fiona Hall, "'The Greater Game': Sport and Society in Christchurch During the First World War, 1914-1918" (M.A. thesis, University of Canterbury, 1989); Andrew Martin, "The Development of Amateur Athletics in Auckland 1890-1940" (M.A. research essay, University of Auckland, 1988); Robert A. Stothart, *The Development of Physical Education in New Zealand* (Auckland: Heinemann Education Books, 1974).

values of middle-class respectability. Ruth Fry's study of the education curriculum for girls includes a chapter which concentrates on the development of physical education and sports for girls from the beginning of the twentieth century. Her work provides a good sense of the subsequent impact of the changes in women's physical activity during the 1890s. Finally, Claire Toynbee examines the ideas of "Community, Sociability and Leisure" in the context of family in twentieth-century New Zealand; this chapter of her doctoral thesis helps to identify some of the wider ramifications of social change which originated in the late-nineteenth century.⁸

Other New Zealand secondary sources were chosen primarily to build a contextual picture of society between 1860 and 1900. General histories of New Zealand, such as those by Keith Sinclair, Bill Oliver and Bridget Williams, Miles Fairburn, and James Belich, offer useful background information on all aspects of New Zealand since its colonisation.⁹ In addition, several histories of women enriched my understanding of women's lives in New Zealand society during this time.¹⁰ Since a comprehensive study of nineteenth-century New Zealand etiquette has yet to be undertaken, finding such material became a piecemeal exercise that involved drawing conclusions from sometimes tenuous references in a wide variety of sources: Stevan Eldred-Grigg's *Pleasures of the Flesh: Sex and Drugs in Colonial New Zealand*, Eileen Soper's *The Otago of Our Mothers*, Helen Simpson's *The Women of New Zealand*, Frances Porter and

8. Sandra Coney, *Every Girl: A Social History of Women and the YWCA in Auckland, 1885-1985* (Auckland: Auckland YWCA, 1986); Ruth Fry, *It's Different for Daughters: A History of the Curriculum for Girls in New Zealand Schools, 1900-1975* (Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1985); Clare Simpson, "The Social History of the Christchurch Young Women's Christian Association, 1883-1930" (M.A. thesis, University of Canterbury, 1984); Claire Toynbee, "Her Work, His Work, and Theirs: The Household Economy and the Family in New Zealand, 1900-1925" (Ph.D. thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1986).

9. Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, 2nd ed. (London: A. Lane, 1980); W. H. Oliver and B. R. Williams, eds., *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (Wellington: Oxford University Press and Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1981); Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and Its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society 1850-1900* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1989); James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders* (Auckland: Allen Lane / The Penguin Press, 1996).

10. Alison Drummond and L. Drummond, *At Home in New Zealand: An Illustrated History of Everyday Things Before 1865* (Auckland: Blackwood and Janet Paul, 1967); Helen M. Simpson, *The Women of New Zealand* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962); Patricia Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press and Oxford University Press, 1972); Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald, and Margaret Tennant, eds., *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin / Port Nicholson Press, 1986); Barbara Brookes, Margaret Tennant, and Charlotte Macdonald, eds., *Women in History 2: Essays on Women in New Zealand* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1992); Charlotte Macdonald, *A Woman of Good Character: Single Women as Immigrant Settlers in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin / Historical Branch, 1990); Charlotte Macdonald, Merimeri Penfold, and Bridget Williams, eds., *The Book of New Zealand Women/Ko Kui Ma Te Kaupapa* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1991); Frances Porter and Charlotte Macdonald, eds., *'My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates': The Unsettled Lives of Women in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand as Revealed to Sisters, Family and Friends*. (Auckland: Auckland University Press/Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1996).

Charlotte Macdonald's *'My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates'*, and Roberta Nicholls' essay "Élite Society in Victorian and Edwardian Wellington," proved the most straightforward of these sources.¹¹ Urban transport history, likewise, is an under-researched area of New Zealand's past, and only three profitable works came to light: Graham Stewart's history of early tramways, which addresses both the technical and social aspects of tram transport in urban areas; James Watson's comprehensive history of transport and New Zealand society; and Mark Alexander's series of studies on aspects of transport history in Christchurch, a valuable source about early roading development and the culture of horse-drawn transport.¹²

Having examined the New Zealand secondary sources most relevant to this research, discussion now turns to the international literature.

International Literature

Although women's sports history is better represented in international literature than in New Zealand, few studies have focused solely on women's cycling. Material was located in either men's cycling histories, or women's sports histories, or in a wide variety of books, theses and academic journals. Once more, it was necessary to use a range of searches to locate this material.¹³

11. Stevan Eldred-Grigg, *Pleasures of the Flesh: Sex and Drugs in Colonial New Zealand, 1840-1915* (Wellington: Reed, 1984); see also Stevan Eldred-Grigg, "'The Beauty and Fashion of the Province': Women of the Landed Gentry of Canterbury, 1880-1910," in *Provincial Perspectives: Essays in Honour of W. J. Gardner*, ed. Len Richardson and W. D. McIntyre (Christchurch: University of Canterbury, 1980(a)), 74-90; Eileen L. Soper, *The Otago of Our Mothers* (Dunedin: Otago Centennial Historical Publications, 1948); Simpson, 1962; Porter and Macdonald, 1996; Roberta Nicholls, "Élite Society in Victorian and Edwardian Wellington," in *The Making of Wellington, 1800-1914*, ed. David Hamer and Roberta Nicholls (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1990), 195-225; see also A. E. Woodhouse, ed., *Tales of Pioneer Women* (Hamilton: Silver Fern, 1988, reprint facsimile of the second revised edition of 1940; first published by the Country Women's Institutes, n.d.).

12. Graham Stewart, *The End of the Penny Section: When Trams Ruled the Streets of New Zealand*, rev. ed., (New Zealand: Grantham House, 1993); James Watson, *Links: The History of Transport and New Zealand Society* (Wellington: GP Publications, 1996); Mark Alexander, *Bullock to Brougham: Private Road Transport in Early Christchurch*, On the Move: Christchurch Transport Through the Years, no. 1, (Christchurch: Christchurch Transport Board and Tramway Historical Society, n.d.); *Hailing a Hansom: Public Transport and Transport in Trade and Industry in Christchurch's Horse-drawn Days*, On the Move: Christchurch Transport Through the Years, no. 2, (Christchurch: Christchurch Transport Board and Tramway Historical Society, n.d.); *Rails in the Road: The Steam and Horse Tram Era in Christchurch*, On the Move: Christchurch Transport Through the Years, no. 3, (Christchurch: Christchurch Transport Board and Tramway Historical Society, n.d.); *The Wire Web: The Christchurch Tramway Board and its Early Electric Tramways 1903-1920*, On the Move: Christchurch Transport Through the Years, no. 4, (Christchurch: Christchurch Transport Board and Tramway Historical Society, 1986).

13. Barbara A. Schultz and Mark P. Schultz, *Bicycles and Bicycling: A Guide to Information Sources*, Sports, Games, and Pastimes Information Guide Series, vol. 6 (Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1979); Walter E. Houghton, ed., *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, [c.1966-1989]); Barbara Kanner, *Women in English Social History, 1800-1914: A Guide to Research in Three Volumes*, vol. 1

(continued...)

Histories of cycling often included small sections in which women's involvement was discussed, but only one study focused solely on women.¹⁴ Most research on women's cycling history exists in the form of single articles, not as expansive inquiries. Without exception, these articles identify the bicycle as playing a key role in women's sociopolitical emancipation, although emphases varied amongst these sources. The research of Anne Hall, Nancy Bradfield, Kylie Winkworth, and Penny Russell, for example, emphasises the role of dress reform in women's emancipation.¹⁵ Winkworth also touches briefly on the themes of mobility, safety, sexuality and the construction of femininity, whilst Russell presents a different approach by making the body her central focus. In the context of her argument that a woman on a bicycle

13(...continued)

(New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1990); Houghton and Kanner were the most helpful resources for finding relevant contemporary sources. In the earliest stages of the project, a number of electronic databases were consulted. Sports Discus (1975 - December 1991) and the Dialog Information Retrieval Service were very useful, the latter searching the America History and Life Database, the Social Scisearch Database, the Magazine Index Database, the Historical Abstracts Database, the Transportation Research Information Services (TRIS) Database, the Sociological Abstracts Database, the Educational Resources Information Center Database, the Psycinfo Database, and the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux Database.

In addition to these electronic searches, I used the Orbit Search Service and consulted a wide range of scholarly sports history journals. These sources yielded valuable information. In the early stages of the research, bibliographic sources such as Brahma Chaudhuri, ed., *A Comprehensive Bibliography of Victorian Studies, 1970-1984* (Edmonton: LITIR Database, 1984), and W. W. Spirduso, ed., *Bibliography of Research Involving Female Subjects: A Compilation of Theses and Dissertations in Physical Education, Health, and Recreation* (Washington: American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, 1974) were useful for locating work on a variety of related themes. Margaret Barrow's guide, *Women 1870-1928: A Select Guide to Printed and Archival Sources in the United Kingdom* (New York: Mansell Publishing / Garland Publishing, 1981), did not yield any information on sport and recreation, but it did confirm reassuringly that the British collections I had consulted (the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, the British Library's Reference Division and Newspaper Library, the Fawcett Library, and Birmingham University Library), represented a sufficiently comprehensive investigation for my purposes. Richard Cox's *History of Sport: A Guide to the Literature and Sources of Information* (England: British Society of Sport History, in association with Sports History Publishers, 1994) was published too late to aid my research, since I had already located material in this bibliography by other means. Cox's 1994 bibliography pulls together a series of bibliographic articles which he published on an annual basis in the *British Journal of Sports History* and, together with his 1991 bibliography, *Sport in Britain: A Bibliography of Historical Publications, 1800-1988* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), will greatly assist future sports historians in their search for information. Finally, I tracked down further material by following up footnoted and bibliographic references in articles and books.

14. Raymond Madden, "'How Delightful is the Sensation': Women and Cycling in the 1890s" (B.A.(hons) thesis, University of New South Wales, 1983). Cycling histories not discussed in this chapter but which I consulted in the course of this study are listed in the bibliography.

15. M. Anne Hall, "The Role of the Safety Bicycle in the Emancipation of Women," *Proceedings of the Second World Symposium on the History of Sport and Physical Education, May 31 - June 3, 1971* (Banff, Canada, 1971), 245-9; Nancy Bradfield, "Cycling in the 1890's," *Costume* 6 (1972): 43-7; Kylie Winkworth, "Women and the Bicycle: Fast, Loose and Liberated," *Australian Journal of Art* 8 (1989): 97-117 (despite the main emphasis being on fashion and clothing, this article provides one of the best overviews of the issues arising for female cyclists); Penny Russell, "Recycling Femininity: Old Ladies and New Women," *Australian Cultural History* 13 (1994): 31-51.

represented the embodiment of the modern woman ("an iconographic image of modernity, gender inversion and moral instability"), Russell identifies three related themes: the symbolism of bifurcated clothing, which centred around the display and action of the legs; improved health as an affirmation and justification for cycling; and the implied sexualisation of female cyclists, disguised as flirtation and romance.¹⁶ These themes are likewise evident in New Zealand women's cycling, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 4.

It is more usual to find women's cycling history as a chapter or section in the many popular books on cycling; less commonly, theses on cycling history, of which there are few, incorporate some material on women. Of the popular accounts of cycling history, the works of Jim Fitzpatrick, James McGurn, Andrew Ritchie, Robert Smith, and John Woodforde devote considerable space to discussing women's cycling. In each of these scholarly books, the women's suffrage and dress reform movements, as well as the debates about health, fitness and propriety, are addressed. These authors are united in their conclusion: women on bicycles challenged the prevailing beliefs about what was appropriate feminine behaviour. Academic historian David Rubinstein has also written about both cycling and women's social emancipation. His work makes frequent reference to women's cycling and, like the writers above, he makes a strong connection between the symbolism of the bicycle and its practical uses in furthering the cause of women's rights.¹⁷

Similarly, women's cycling history is usually presented as a single chapter or section in books or theses about sporting history. The investigations of women's cycling by Denis Molyneux, Judy Grossbard, June Kennard, Kathleen McCrone, Patricia Marks, Helen Lenskyj,

16. I am indebted to Dr. Peter Mewett of Deakin University for passing on to me the article by Penny Russell, which arrived very late in the research process. It affirmed that the medical profession had a significant hand in constructing feminine morality, especially women's sexuality, specifically in the context of cycling. Russell's research reveals overt discussions about masturbation and bicycle seats, for example, subjects which are only vaguely hinted at in contemporary sources of a non-medical origin; this notion fuelled one of the arguments against women's cycling and, conversely, stimulated much writing about saddle designs for women. Russell's article is also the only research which cited the valuable work by Kylie Winkworth.

17. Jim Fitzpatrick, *The Bicycle and the Bush: Man and Machine in Rural Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980(a)); this book is based on Fitzpatrick's Ph.D. thesis, "The Bicycle in Rural Australia: A Study of Man, Machine and Milieu" (Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 1978); James McGurn, *On Your Bicycle: An Illustrated History of Cycling* (London: John Murray, 1987); Andrew Ritchie, *King of the Road: An Illustrated History of Cycling* (London: Wildwood House, 1975); Robert A. Smith, *A Social History of the Bicycle: Its Early Life and Times in America* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1972); John Woodforde, *The Story of the Bicycle* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970); David Rubinstein, "Cycling in the 1890s," *Victorian Studies* 21 (1977): 47-71; *Before the Suffragettes: Women's Emancipation in the 1890s* (England: The Harvester Press, 1986), especially Chapter 12, "Leisure," 211-32; Rubinstein's work represents an excellent overview of cycling history in the wider context of British social history. His meticulous documentation of sources yields valuable reference material.

and Marion Stell are much more rigorous than those found in the accounts of women's cycling mentioned above. In his study of the development of physical recreation in Birmingham, Molyneux looks at both cycling and at women. The two topics coincide in his discussion on women's tricycling (rather than bicycling) in the 1880s, and although descriptive rather than analytical, it is the most expansive work on women and tricycling.¹⁸ Each of the other writers brings a feminist analysis to the material, identifying and exploring from a feminist viewpoint the themes that consistently emerge: dress reform, health, exercise and the medical establishment, propriety, and the changing roles of women in society. Grossbard's study of American women's sportswear includes research on bicycling costumes. The chief value of her study was the discussion of women's horseback riding and concomitant sartorial changes. The idea of cycling as a progression from riding is clearly demonstrated, and foreshadows subsequent arguments about bifurcated clothing and women's bicycling.¹⁹ Both Kennard's study and McCrone's book *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of English Women 1870-1914*, develop the major themes of cycling within their comprehensive examinations of women and sport in nineteenth-century England. The aim of McCrone's research was "to investigate reactions against [the Victorian view of woman's place] and the emergence of a counter-view through sport and exercise." She argues that cycling "provided women with their most significant experience of physical exercise and did more than any other activity to break down conservative restrictions."²⁰ This assertion is echoed in the contemporary literature, and affirms the significant role cycling played in the promotion of women's physical activity in the late-nineteenth century, hence its validity as a topic for in-depth research. Patricia Marks's study of the satires and caricatures of the 'New Woman' in British and American periodicals of the 1880s and 1890s examines the contribution of the bicycle to changing stereotypes of Victorian femininity.²¹ Cycling is also discussed in Lenskyj's work, which takes sexuality as the central theme, examining medical views of North American women's health and physical potential, and the social attitudes and practices which

18. Denis D. Molyneux, "The Development of Physical Recreation in the Birmingham District From 1871 to 1892" (M.A. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1957). Since the terminal date of his research is 1892, by which time very few women were riding bicycles, it is understandable that bicycling does not figure prominently.

19. Judy Grossbard, "Style Changes in American Women's Sportswear From 1881-1910" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University College of Human Sciences, 1990).

20. June Kennard, "Woman, Sport and Society in Victorian England" (Ph.D. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1974); Kathleen McCrone, *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of English Women 1870-1914* (London: Routledge, 1988), Preface (no page numbers).

21. Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky, 1990), Chapter 6, "Women's Athletics: A Bicycle Built for One," 174-203.

restricted women's activities.²² Finally, Stell's history of Australian women in sport stands out as one of the most extensive and rigorous studies in the field of women's sporting history to date. Women's cycling is well documented, including the early years when, in 1876, a visiting English performer, wearing tights and riding astride, demonstrated her skills on a velocipede (Figure 1).

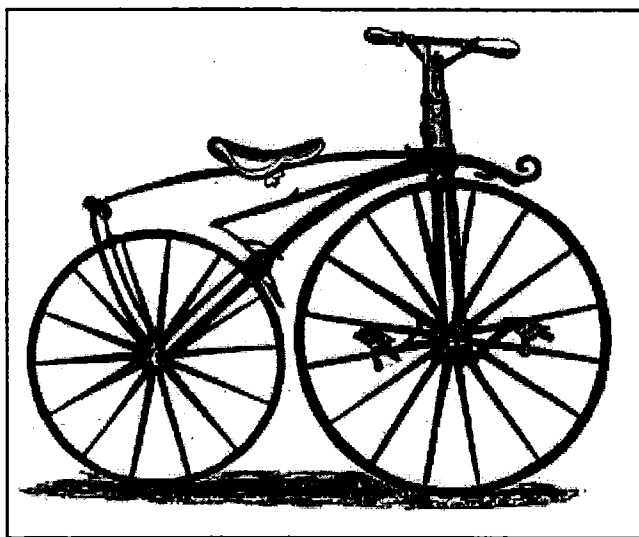


Figure 1: A Velocipede: "The French Bicycle"
[Source: *Velocipedes*, 1870, 9.]

Stell argues that bicycles represented "transport, independence, rational clothing, travel, exercise, competition and fun."²³ Although my study of women's cycling in New Zealand recognises the same themes mentioned above by other researchers, my research uniquely identifies *public space* as a significant factor in explaining the controversy surrounding women's cycling in the late-nineteenth century. Other feminist researchers have recognised the public-private dichotomy of women's lives in the nineteenth-century, but my research highlights its significance for how women's cycling impacted on the gender order. As I will signal below, public space is a significant feature of nineteenth-century modernity, and I will argue that it was only when women began to ride bicycles in public that emotions were strongly aroused.

22. Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1986), particularly Chapter 3, "Perfecting Womanhood Through Sport," 59-64, which focuses on cycling.

23. Marion K. Stell, *Half the Race: A History of Australian Women in Sport* (Australia: Angus and Robertson, 1991), 20. Stell has a long and extensive background in sports history research and scholarship.

Other histories of women and sport have contributed to this study of women and cycling. The most helpful research findings, in terms of both information and analysis, were those of Sheila Fletcher, Jennifer Hargreaves, Roberta Park, and Patricia Vertinsky.²⁴ Together, their feminist-informed research on nineteenth-century women's sport and physical recreation appraises the most important contemporary debates: medicine, education, sexuality, media, domesticity, motherhood, and propriety.²⁵ Each author recognises the need for explicit female-centred research in sports history. Because their sporting experiences were so different to those of men, women's stories must be interpreted and explained in appropriate ways. We cannot continue to assume, as historians without a gender analysis have done, either that women had no interest in or experience of sport or physical activity, or that women attached the same meanings to their sporting pursuits as those expressed by men. This study of New Zealand women's cycling recognises the importance of a gendered analysis, and attempts to explain and interpret female cycling experiences in the context of what it meant to live as a woman at the end of the nineteenth century.²⁶

I chose other non-New Zealand secondary sources to amplify my understanding of the context of the recreation interests of immigrants before they left England, to gain a better understanding of the factors which shaped Victorian ideals of femininity. First, I consulted general information about the world of Victorian middle-class women, particularly in connection with prevailing thought in the late-nineteenth century.²⁷ Some of the more predominant ideas

24. See also David J. Whitson, "Sport, Culture and Social Reproduction" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Queensland, 1987). Chapter 4, "Histories of Physical Education and Sport: Studies in Class and Gender Empowerment," presents an interesting discussion of the interplay of class and gender in the context of cultural hegemony.

25. Sheila Fletcher, "The Making and Breaking of a Female Tradition: Women's Physical Education in England 1880-1980," *British Journal of Sports History* 2, no. 1 (1985): 29-39; Jennifer Hargreaves, "'Playing Like Gentlemen While Behaving Like Ladies': Contradictory Features of the Formative Years of Women's Sport," *The British Journal of Sports History* 2, no. 1 (1985): 40-52, and Jennifer Hargreaves, *Sporting Traditions: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sport* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); J. A. Mangan and Roberta J. Park, eds., *From 'Fair Sex' to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-industrial Eras* (London: Frank Cass, 1987), an anthology of articles including research by Vertinsky, Park, McCrone, Hargreaves, Fletcher, and Lenskyj; Margery Bulgar's "American Sportswomen in the 19th Century," *Journal of Popular Culture* 16, no. 2 (1981): 1-16, and Stephanie Twin's collection of essays in *Out of the Bleachers: Writings on Women and Sport* (New York: The Feminist Press, and New York: The McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1979) provided additional background for the North American context.

26. Whilst I am arguing that women's cycling experiences differed from men's in many respects, I am not assuming that *all* women's cycling experiences were identical to one another; I acknowledge that individual women's experiences differ for numerous reasons, including those of race and class.

27. Sara Delamont and Lorna Duffin, eds., *The Nineteenth-century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), Chapter 4, by Paul Atkinson "Fitness, Feminism and Schooling," and Chapter 6, by Sara Delamont, "The Domestic Ideology and Women's Education," were

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were published in the magazines that middle-class women read.²⁸ Since women on bicycles were also potentially a mobile population, I read with great interest and admiration the stories of female Victorian travellers, in a desire to know what kinds of women embraced such challenges and what prompted their sojourns.²⁹ Second, I consulted a wide range of sources to gain a broader understanding of the ubiquitous influence that sport and leisure had on the daily lives of middle-class Victorians in the late-nineteenth century, both in Britain³⁰ and New Zealand's colonial neighbour, Australia.³¹ A study of working women's leisure in New York contributed fresh insights about leisure at the turn of the century.³² Additionally, I considered the health and medical experiences of women to be relevant, as many of the debates surrounding women's cycling focused on the potential physical damage the activity might cause.³³ Third,

27(...continued)

particularly informative in regard to my research; Erna Olafson Hellerstein, Leslie Parker Hume, and Karen M. Offen, eds., *Victorian Women: A Documentary Account of Women's Lives in Nineteenth-Century England, France, and the United States* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1981); Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1957); Stella Margetson, *Victorian High Society* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1980).

28. Margaret Beetham, "Nineteenth-century Women's Magazines," in *Women's Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman's Magazine*, ed. R. Ballaster, M. Beetham, E. Frazer, S. Hebron (London: Macmillan, 1991), 75-107; Lee Jolliffe, "Women's Magazines in the 19th Century," *Journal of Popular Culture* Spring (1994): 125-40; Trevor Millum, *Images of Women: Advertising in Women's Magazines* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), Chapter 3, "Physical Appearance and Concepts of Femininity," 53-79; Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

29. Dorothy Middleton, *Victorian Lady Travellers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965); Jane Robinson, *Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Mary Russell, *The Blessings of a Good Thick Skirt: Women Travellers and their World* (London: Collins, 1986).

30. Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control 1830-1885* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); John Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes 1870-1914* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993); J. A. Mangan, ed., *Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism: British Culture and Sport at Home and Abroad 1700-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1988); Tony Mason, ed., *Sport in Britain: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Wray Vamplew, *Pay Up and Play the Game: Professional Sport in Britain 1875-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

31. Richard Cashman and M. McKernan, *Sport in History: The Making of Modern Sporting History* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1979); John A. Daly, *Elysian Fields: Sport, Class and Community in Colonial South Australia 1836-1890* (Adelaide: John Daly, 1982).

32. Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

33. Brian Harrison, "Women's Health and the Women's Movement in Britain: 1840-1940," in *Biology, Medicine and Society, 1840-1940*, ed. C. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 15-72; Jean L'Esperance, "Doctors and Women in Nineteenth-century Society: Sexuality and Role," in *Health Care and Popular Medicine in Nineteenth Century England: Essays in the Social History of Medicine*, ed. John Woodward and David Richards (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 105-27; Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), Chapter 2, "Scenes of Indelicate Character: The Medical Treatment

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the nature and intensity of the public's reaction to women on bicycles illustrates the degree to which women's cycling breached both written and unwritten codes of conduct. To appreciate the seriousness of such transgressions, I surveyed a range of literature about manners, and about women in the public arena.³⁴ Women's experiences of the public arena and its potential dangers were amply and graphically illustrated in other works.³⁵ Fourth, it was important to identify the ideals of Victorian middle-class femininity which underpinned and circumscribed the rules of respectable conduct in public. The ways in which young Victorian girls were brought up and assisted in the transition to womanhood in the rapidly changing world of the late-nineteenth century were relevant.³⁶ Since clothing played a vital role in signalling status and respectability, an understanding of fashion and of related controversies (such as dress reform) was helpful, as were histories of underwear and sportswear, which enhanced my understanding of the debates concerning dress and women's cycling.³⁷ Information about

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of Victorian Women," 24-50; Patricia Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors, and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Patricia Vertinsky, "Body Shapes: The Role of the Medical Establishment in Informing Female Exercise and Physical Education in Nineteenth-century North America," in *From 'Fair Sex' to Feminism: Sport and the Socialisation of Women in the Industrial and Post-industrial Eras*, ed. J. A. Mangan and Roberta Park (London: Frank Cass, 1987), 256-81.

34. Reading about etiquette in New Zealand (discussed in Chapter 2) affirmed the relevance of both British and American etiquette for New Zealand society; Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (London: Croom Helm, 1973); John F. Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990).

35. Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982); especially Chapter 2, "Hypocrisy and Sincerity in the World of Strangers," and Chapter 4, "Sentimental Culture and the Problem of Etiquette;" Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), Chapter 2, "Everyday Space: Gender and the Geography of the Public," and Chapter 4, "The Public Sphere: Of Handkerchiefs, Brickbats, and Women's Rights;" Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), Chapter 2, "Roles," Chapter 7, "The Impact of Industrial Capitalism on Public Life," and Chapter 8, "Personality in Public," were especially useful; Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) and Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), especially Chapter 1, "Urban Spectatorship," and Chapter 2, "Contested Terrain: New Social Actors."

36. Joan N. Burstyn, *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); Carol Dyhouse, "Social Darwinist Ideas and the Development of Women's Education in England, 1880-1920," *History of Education* 5, no. 1 (1976): 41-58; Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985); Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); J. A. Mangan, "The Social Construction of Victorian Femininity: Emancipation, Education and Exercise," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 6 (1989): 1-9; Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151-64.

37. C. W. Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington, *The History of Underclothes* (London: M. Joseph, 1951); C. W. Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Nineteenth Century*

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equestrian costumes further improved my comprehension; riding a bicycle was viewed as an extension of horseback riding, and initially, the etiquette of riding was applied directly to cycling.³⁸ Finally, I must acknowledge the valuable contribution of two books that refer to different aspects of mobility. Peter Cuffley's account of horse-drawn vehicles in Australia illustrates comprehensively the kinds of designs that were available in both the Australian and New Zealand colonies, along with their costs and common uses, and enabled me to better visualise the competition for road use by nineteenth-century New Zealanders. Additionally, Stephen Kern's fascinating study of the concepts of time and space, in the period from 1880 to 1918, offers interesting insights about the ideas of speed and distance, including the impact of the sensations cyclists reported experiencing.³⁹

Discussion now turns to the primary sources and the assumptions made of them.

Primary Sources

Because there is a paucity of New Zealand primary material on cycling, I extended my research to consult a wide range of contemporary sources to build a comprehensive picture of women's cycling in late-nineteenth century New Zealand.⁴⁰

Periodicals and Newspapers

During the search for information in contemporary periodicals and newspapers, I focused principally on New Zealand and British material, exploring beyond the topic of cycling to look

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(London: Faber and Faber, 1959); Phillis Cunnington and Alan Mansfield, *English Costume for Sports and Outdoor Recreation from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1969); David Kunzle, "Dress Reform as Antifeminism: A Response to Helene E. Roberts's 'The Exquisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman,'" *Signs* 2, no. 3 (1977): 570-9; David Kunzle, *Fashion and Fetishism: A Social History of the Corset, Tight-lacing and Other Forms of Body-sculpture in the West* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982); Sarah Levitt, *Victorians Unbuttoned: Registered Designs for Clothing, Their Makers and Wearers, 1839-1900* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986).

38. Jean R. Druessedow, "Aside and Astride: A History of Ladies' Riding Apparel," in *Man and the Horse: An Illustrated History of Equestrian Apparel*, ed. Alexander Mackay-Smith, Jean R. Druessedow and Thomas Ryder (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Simon and Schuster, 1984), 59-90; Irene Foster, "The Development of Riding Costume, c. 1880-1920," *Costume* 3 (1969): 55-60.

39. Peter Cuffley, *Buggies and Horse Drawn Vehicles in Australia* (Victoria: Pioneer Design Studio, 1981); Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983).

40. Non-English sources were excluded from the research unless they offered material that was significant and unavailable in any English sources. For example, English translations of early French material were helpful in establishing the chronology of bicycle development.

for information about etiquette and conduct, health and fitness, fashion and dress, and beliefs about femininity.⁴¹

Three New Zealand cycling periodicals were established before 1900: *The New Zealand Wheelman* (1892), *The New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette* (1896) and *The New Zealand Cyclist* (1897).⁴² Since each of these magazines featured 'ladies' pages' regularly from their inception, they were an abundantly rich source of material about women's cycling in New Zealand.⁴³

The use of British cycling periodicals played a significant role in extending my understanding of women's cycling in New Zealand. Although there were parochial differences in the cycling practices and experiences between the two countries, the underlying issues surrounding women's cycling were identical. The cycling magazines for women which I found most informative were: *At the Sign of the Butterfly*, *The Hub*,⁴⁴ *Lady Cyclist*,⁴⁵ and *The Wheelwoman*. Of the British general cycling magazines, the following included ladies' columns or extensive articles on women: *The Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, *Cycling*, *Bicycling News*, *The Cyclist*, *The Wheelworld*, *The Wheeler*, *Wheeling*, and *Wheel Life*.⁴⁶

British society magazines (many of which were brought to New Zealand by immigrants or were sent out by relatives) also proved to be a fruitful source. The magazines which regularly featured articles about women and cycling linked the activity with a wide range of topics such as health, exercise and fitness, physiology, dress and fashion, etiquette, propriety, and the progress of womankind. Examples of the most useful of these sources are: *The Nineteenth Century*, *The Girls' Own Paper*, *The Humanitarian*, *The Woman's Signal*, *The Rational Dress*

41. I did not consult unpublished diaries or manuscripts.

42. Both the *New Zealand Wheelman* and *The New Zealand Cyclist* were published from Christchurch, whilst the *New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette* was based in Wellington.

43. Despite extensive nationwide correspondence to provincial museums and libraries, I located only two club archives: the Christchurch Pioneer Bicycle Club and the Nelson Provincial Amateur Athletics and Cycling Club. These archives yielded very little about the activities of women. Existing cycling club histories were similarly inadequate in their coverage of their nineteenth-century origins, let alone the activities of women, which were never featured.

44. A society cyclists' magazine, launched in 1896 and published by George Newnes Ltd. and originally run by the staff of *Tit Bits*. It struggled on for a couple of years, but was never considered of practical use to cyclists. Sir George Newnes brought in C. L. Freeston, an active cyclist and experienced tourist, to edit the paper; Freeston increased the circulation to 30,000, but the paper folded in 1899 amidst the economic depression of the late 1890s. H. W. Bartleet, *Bartleet's Bicycle Book* (London: Ed. J. Burrow and Co., 1931; reprint ed., Birmingham, John Pinkerton, 1983), 156.

45. A threepenny monthly magazine published by The Cycle Press Ltd. C. P. Sisley, a well known cycling author, was its editor. The first issue appeared in March 1895, but the paper only lasted about a year. Bartleet, 1983, 156.

46. See the bibliography for a more extensive list of cycling periodicals. For a review of early British cycling magazines, see H. W. Bartleet, "Early Days of the Cycling Press," in *Bartleet's Bicycle Book*, 1983, 147-56.

*Society's Gazette, The Sketch, The Young Woman, Fraser's Magazine, Longman's Magazine, Macmillan's Magazine, National Review, The Fortnightly Review, and The Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review.*⁴⁷

Finally, several New Zealand newspapers were surveyed for information about cycling and related themes. As newspaper research is an extremely time-consuming task, I gave priority to newspapers which had been indexed. I also considered it important to survey a major paper from each of the main urban centres. To this end, I selected four papers: *The New Zealand Graphic and Ladies' Journal* (Auckland); *The New Zealand Mail* (Wellington); *The Press* (Christchurch); and *The Otago Witness* (Dunedin). If cross-referencing were necessary to cover gaps, or to verify the ubiquity or uniqueness of some reports, I followed up references in a number of other newspapers. In addition, I consulted the cycling columns in *The White Ribbon*, produced by the Women's Christian Temperance Union, because they are relevant to the suffrage focus of this thesis.⁴⁸

Books and Articles

Similarly, I referred to numerous books and essays on cycling, as well as manuals on etiquette, domesticity, health, and emigration, plus tour guides and colonial reminiscences.

New Zealand books and articles relating specifically to cycling or associated topics were scarce, but many contemporary reference books helped me build a picture of nineteenth-century women's cycling. Three cycling books, an edition of an annual pocket book and diary, a cycling guide book, and a trade exhibition catalogue, had little specific information about women, although the trade catalogue listed women's cycling clubs and an estimate of membership numbers.⁴⁹ I gauged a better appreciation of the impact of cycling in New Zealand by studying *Statistics of New Zealand, 1870-1900*, the annual *New Zealand Year Book*, regional almanacs, and the *Stones and Wisers* directories,⁵⁰ as well as the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, which detailed manufacturing trends, sporting clubs, and featured prominent citizens for each region.⁵¹

47. *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* was particularly useful in pointing to these magazines.

48. A comprehensive list of the newspapers and magazines I consulted appears in the bibliography.

49. New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club, *Pocket Book and Diary, Season 1897-98* (Wellington, 1897); New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club, *Road Book* (Wellington, 1900); *New Zealand Metropolitan Cycle Show, Christchurch 6 and 13, 1897*, Catalogue, 1897.

50. These also provided excellent biographical information.

51. *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, Wellington Provincial District (Wellington: Cyclopedia Co., 1897); *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, Auckland Provincial District (Christchurch: Cyclopedia Co., 1902); *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 3, Canterbury Provincial

(continued...)

As immigration to New Zealand increased during the 1870s, manuals were published to assist new or potential settlers. Advice on survival in the new colony is very detailed in these manuals, and they thus provide a full picture of what early colonists encountered when they arrived, and what it was like to live here. Within twenty years, New Zealand had developed a thriving tourism industry, and produced some comprehensive tour guides. In addition to highlighting the scenic attractions and tours, the guides provide details of transport and communication services, and descriptions of accommodation and associated rates, giving yet another well-documented account of life in colonial New Zealand.⁵²

I found the personal perspectives offered by colonial reminiscences were an invaluable resource, because they captured the emotions, thoughts, and feelings about people's everyday lives. Although many of the story tellers seemed not to have encountered the velocipedes or bicycles that had been brought into New Zealand, their accounts were nevertheless valuable as a comparison with those who did acquire and extol the virtues of these vehicles.⁵³ These proved a good source of information about what life was like for many New Zealand women in the nineteenth century.

Inevitably, British books and articles about cycling were more numerous and were useful in particular two ways. First, many books published from around 1869 through to the early 1890s focused on describing the various designs of velocipedes, tricycles, quadricycles, and bicycles, and instructed potential riders on how to mount, ride and dismount such machines, as

51(...continued)

District (Christchurch: Cyclopedia Co., 1903); *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 4, Otago and Southland Provincial Districts (Christchurch: Cyclopedia Co., 1905); *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 5, Nelson, Marlborough and Westland Provincial Districts (Christchurch: Cyclopedia Co., 1906); *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 6, Taranaki, Hawkes Bay and Wellington Provincial Districts, (Christchurch: Cyclopedia Co., 1908).

52. Ernest E. Bilbrough, ed., *Brett's Handy Guide to New Zealand*, Illustrated Jubilee Edition (Auckland: H. Brett, 1890); M. Moseley, *Illustrated Guide to Christchurch and Neighbourhood* (Christchurch: J. T. Smith, 1885); *New Zealand Tours and Excursions: Tourist Guide to the Lakes, Mountains and Fiords* (Wellington: John Mackay, Government Printer, 1898), one of a series of books covering different areas of New Zealand; Richard Wedderspoon, *The New Zealand Illustrated Tourist Guide: The Most Wonderful Scenic Paradise in the World* (Christchurch: Simpson and Williams, [1925]).

53. Mary Anne Barker, *Station Life in New Zealand* (London: Virago, 1984; first published in 1870); Mary Anne Barker, *Station Amusements in New Zealand* (London: Macmillan, 1873); Sarah Amelia Courage, *Lights and Shadows of Colonial Life: Twenty-six Years in Canterbury, New Zealand*, 2d annotated ed. (Christchurch: Whitcoulls Publishers, 1976; first published c. 1896); Charles Percy Cox, *Personal Notes and Reminiscences of an Early Canterbury Settler* (Christchurch: The Canterbury Publishing Co. Ltd., 1915); Arthur Dudley Dobson, *Reminiscences of Arthur Dudley Dobson, Engineer, 1841-1930* (New Zealand: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1930); E. M. L. Studholme, *Reminiscences of 1860* (Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs Limited, n.d.); Ellen Shephard Tripp, *My Early Days* (Geo. R. Joyce, 1915).

well as care for and maintain them. Such instruction books essentially document the early social history of human-powered road vehicles.⁵⁴

Second, a large and extensive literature about women burgeoned as they began cycling and pursuing more physically active pursuits generally in the mid-1890s. A number of British cycling books for ladies emerged at this time, as well as a multitude of magazine articles on all associated aspects of cycling. The work of a few key authors consistently emerged as authorities on these issues. The main authors who wrote in support of female cyclists were N. G. Bacon, Lady Beatrice Violet Greville, Lillias Campbell Davidson, F. J. Erskine, Maria Ward, Elizabeth Robins Pennell, Frances Willard, Isabel Marks, and the Countess of Malmesbury.⁵⁵ Other supportive authors included well-known cycling writers such as Viscount Bury, G. Lacy Hillier, R. J. Mecredy, and the Earl of Albermarle.

Many prominent people commented on women's cycling from within their own specialist field or interests. Medical professionals such as Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson, William Fenton, E. B. Turner and numerous other doctors wrote about cycling in relation to health, exercise and fitness. Dress reformers such as Viscountess Harberton, and fashion writers such as Mary Haweis, used cycling to voice their opinions about sartorial matters.⁵⁶ Writers of etiquette manuals attempted in their annual editions to chart an up-to-date, but conservative, course for female cyclists, appealing to their sense of propriety in adopting prudent cycling practices.⁵⁷ In all of these areas there were, of course, critics of cycling. Mrs E. Lynn Linton, English novelist and anti-feminist journalist, for example, was a constant critic of the activity, characterising cycling as an ungraceful fashion. Physician and novelist Dr. Arabella Kenealy likewise vigorously denounced women's cycling as unfeminine and unhealthy. Fashion writers

54. These are listed comprehensively in the bibliography.

55. Elizabeth Robins Pennell (1855-1936), writer and traveller; Frances Elizabeth Willard (1839-1898), American founder of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, who wrote a book about how she learned to ride the bicycle at age fifty-three. The articles or books written by the authors cited in the text are listed in the bibliography.

56. Viscount Bury, London broker and cyclist, George Lacy Hillier (1856-1941), edited many volumes of the Badminton Library Series on Cycling; Richard James Mecredy (1861-1924), cycling enthusiast; Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson (1828-1896), physician; William Fenton (1854-1928), senior surgeon at Chelsea Hospital for Women; Edward Beacon Turner (1859-1931), physician and cyclist; Lady Harberton (Florence Wallace Pomeroy), one of the founders of the British Rational Dress Society, d. 1911; Mary Eliza Haweis (1848-1898), writer on fashion and interior decoration, and wife of Reverend Hugh Reginald Haweis, who wrote at least once about 'mannish' girls.

57. Etiquette writers who addressed cycling included well know figures such as journalist Mrs C. E. Humphrey (d. 1925) and Maude Cooke; numerous volumes were produced anonymously.

for society magazines and newspaper columns gave prominence to cycling costumes which were most alike to walking dresses, and bifurcation was either overlooked or ridiculed.⁵⁸

Other Primary Sources

Finally, I discovered a miscellany of photographic sources which helped enrich the text sources. Photographs were invaluable for identifying the models and designs of cycles that had come into the colony but which were not written about (especially before 1890, showing that velocipedes, tricycles and four-wheeled designs were in use). Photographs also graphically depicted the condition of the rural and town roads that cyclists so frequently described; interestingly, the pre-1895 photographs show very few street-life scenes because photographic techniques and technology were unable to keep moving images in focus.⁵⁹ Annually posed photographs of cycling clubs show the gradual infiltration of women into clubs in the early 1890s, as well as the explosion of cycling numbers generally by the mid-1890s. Likewise, scenes taken at cycle races show the thousands of spectators that reporters commented on in the press, and there are also pictures taken outside stadia showing tangled masses of bicycles parked there by the spectators. By the end of the century, street scenes show the crowded traffic of which cyclists and cab-drivers alike despaired, with pedestrians weaving amongst horses, carriages, trams, cycles and just a few motor cars.

This research makes two deliberate, but calculated, assumptions of the sources used. The first assumption is that the values concerning British middle-class respectability were successfully transported and adapted to life in the young colony. The primary sources clearly show that New Zealand immigrants retained strong emotional ties to Britain.⁶⁰ They corresponded frequently, eagerly awaited the arrival of familiar magazines and newspapers, and thought of and referred to England as 'Home'.⁶¹ As Chapter 2 will show, immigrants continued to follow familiar social practices, confident that their displays of respectability would

58. Eliza Lynn Linton (1822-1898), wrote a famous essay, "The Girl of the Period" in 1868. See Chapter 4, note no. 96; Arabella Kenealy (1864-1938), had to give up her career due to ill health, and turned to writing on medical and ethical subjects.

59. The well-known Canterbury photographer Dr. Barker took most of his town photographs early in the morning when the light was good, and when no one was present. (Pers. comm., Canterbury Museum Pictorial Archivist).

60. See, for example, Porter and Macdonald, 1996.

61. Some of the magazines that were sent to New Zealand have survived, a large number of which are held at the Auckland City Library Archive. The *Union List of Serials in New Zealand Libraries* reveals an extensive range of mid- to late-nineteenth century magazines. e.g., *Blackwood's Magazine*, *Contemporary Review*, *Cornhill Magazine*, *Edinburgh Review*, *Fortnightly Review*, *Fraser's Magazine*, *Harper's Weekly*, *The Humanitarian*, *The Lady's Realm*, etc. There were copies of the British society cycling magazine *The Hub* found in the Auckland collection.

be correctly interpreted by others. In as many ways as possible, immigrants continued to conduct their affairs as if they were in England, and pursued as many of their former sports and pastimes as they could.

The second assumption is that the advent, development, and response to women's cycling was fairly uniform throughout the country. There was, however, a strong reporting bias in the contemporary press towards cycling in Canterbury. Christchurch, the major city in the province of Canterbury, had the greatest number of cyclists, its flat topography and temperate climate ideally suited to cycling. In addition, the roads were wide and comparatively well maintained. It was also in Christchurch that two of the three contemporary cycling magazines, the *New Zealand Wheelman* (1892) and the *New Zealand Cyclist* (1897), were established to report items of interest to cyclists all over the country. Whilst much of the descriptive material in this study centres on cycling in Christchurch, the issues it raised there were nevertheless representative of sentiment throughout New Zealand; this will be documented in Chapter 3.⁶² The subjects of reports concerning cycling activities seldom varied, regardless of their originating location. Everywhere, female cyclists were concerned with their dress and appearance, their safety, club activities, society gossip, the latest word on bicycle designs for women (especially saddles), *etc.*

The force of the debates was not ubiquitous, however; protest was voiced more energetically in some centres than others. Public opinion about cycling in Dunedin, for example, was particularly negative, whereas views in Christchurch were more moderate. This may be because Christchurch was a more politically liberal city, and perhaps female cyclists were more accepted there.⁶³ The vitriolic nature of the anti-suffrage discourse in Dunedin in the 1890s testifies to that city's political conservatism. Another explanation might be that women on bicycles were less conspicuous in Christchurch than in Dunedin, simply because there were so many more of them on the streets and the public was more accustomed to the sight. The social climate and the numbers of women cycling are the factors most likely to have contributed to the variance in the intensity of debates in different urban centres; notwithstanding that, the themes debated about women on bicycles were identical throughout New Zealand.

62. I recognise that in *other* ways, Christchurch was not 'representative' of all urban centres; it was one of the planned settlements, the most English of cities. My thanks to Bob Gidlow for this observation.

63. The female suffrage debate, for example, was hardly mentioned in the local papers, despite prominent Christchurch people such as Kate Sheppard being at the forefront of the movement. Margaret Lovell-Smith, local historian, thinks this may be because of the liberal nature of Christchurch, and that the lack of press coverage may reflect the acceptance of the suffrage arguments (Pers. comm.).

Having examined the research in the field of sports history and the sources used for this study, I turn now to explore the issues specific to cycling that signal this topic as a valid contribution to the field, elaborating on the scope of this study, its focus, and the theoretical frameworks.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on New Zealand middle-class women's cycling in urban centres in the 1890s. When middle-class immigrant and native-born New Zealand women began exploring urban public space on their bicycles, their actions symbolised to onlookers the changes in women's social position which had been developing since the early 1880s, and which accelerated during the 1890s. Public reaction signalled the release of underlying social tensions about existing middle-class feminine ideals, ideals which were threatened by the highly visible act of a woman riding a bicycle in public.

This study focuses on the experiences of 'middle-class' women. While it is difficult to define the parameters of the middle class, it is commonly acknowledged that the social status and social mobility of women in the nineteenth century were determined, for the most part, by the occupational status of their nearest male relative, usually a father or husband.⁶⁴ For the purposes of this study, I have loosely defined middle-class women as women whose fathers or husbands were likely to be members of a profession (including clergy and teachers) or who were in business (including manufacturers, merchants, and managers in the commercial sector); men represented in these occupational categories probably had sufficient disposable income to purchase leisure activities for themselves and their families.⁶⁵ It is unlikely that females associated with these occupational groupings were in paid employment. They would have concentrated their energies on supervising and caring for their households and families, and probably engaged domestic help. Women in this situation, therefore, had the time and the

64. Women's ability to further their own occupational careers was very limited in the nineteenth century.

65. I am mindful of the problematic treatment of 'class' in sociology and history, and especially of the issue of applying class factors to a quickly changing colonial society like New Zealand. I hesitate to use the term 'gentry' in connection with the cyclists I am discussing, for this suggests the idea of a social élite, divorced and aloof from mainstream society; the stories which appear in the cycling magazines show the presence of respectable citizens who very much mixed and mingled in the urban landscape. See James Belich, *Making Peoples*, 321-8, for an interesting discussion of gentry vs. respectability. To explore the debates about class and its definition in New Zealand colonial society is beyond the scope of this research. For the seeds of what I consider a promising debate, see Claire Toynbee, "Class and Social Structure in Nineteenth-century New Zealand," *New Zealand Journal of History* 13, no. 1 (1979): 65-82, and other articles in that issue.

capital to pursue cycling as one of their many and varied leisure activities. McCrone notes that it was the needs, aspirations, and physical frustrations of middle-class women that were asserted before other groups of women, as a consequence of the educational and recreational experiences which raised their consciousness.⁶⁶ Free from financial and temporal concerns, middle-class women were thus able to realise the potential that cycling offered. Membership of the middle-classes also suggests a cultural dimension which is not solely about income and the consumption of goods, but more about social conduct and *styles* of consumption and display.⁶⁷

The temporal focus is on the 1890s, but reference will be made to the period up to World War One. To extend the research beyond 1900 is entirely consistent with the convention of the 'long nineteenth century,' which terminates at 1914 with the advent of World War One. By 1914, women's presence in public had become so commonplace that activities such as their cycling no longer attracted public attention. The controversies surrounding cycling had well and truly abated. The bicycle had also ceased to be a bourgeois plaything (superseded by the motorcar as the new symbol of status) and had become appropriated by the lower classes as a form of individual transport. The price of new bicycles, which had been dropping steadily due to techniques of mass production in the cycle manufacturing industry, and the growing market for second-hand machines, made the bicycle more widely accessible.

The late-nineteenth century is often linked to the notion of modernisation, which is one of the major analytical frameworks for this study; the 1890s was a period in which western societies were experiencing new and powerful forces of social change. The terms 'modernisation' and 'modernity', the precise meanings of which are debated extensively in the literature, are often employed interchangeably in literature referring to the late-nineteenth century.⁶⁸ In this research I recognise that, whilst each term describes a specific phenomenon, the two concepts are interrelated, and each one has some pertinence for this study. My understanding of these terms and how they concern women's cycling in New Zealand is discussed below.

66. McCrone, 1988, Preface (no page numbers).

67. See, for example, Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1899; reprinted, with an introduction by C. Wright Mills, London: Allen & Unwin, 1970). His argument is that one of the signs of membership of the leisure class is the display of goods that serve no other purpose than as a mark of prestige. All other classes seek to emulate the displays of the leisure class in the hope that they, too, might be taken to belong. The upper-middle class is in the best position to emulate the elite status of the leisure class, since its members have discretionary incomes and can buy time by employing others to do some of their work for them.

68. One of the reasons why there is so much debate is because the terms are frequently used interchangeably.

A number of factors lie beyond the scope of this study. At the core of this research is the experience of New Zealand women cyclists. I use the cycling experiences of women in other countries to assist in locating New Zealand women's cycling in the international context, and to highlight either the internationally shared aspects of cycling or those unique to New Zealand. Since this study maintains its focus on *women's* cycling, men's cycling is not considered relevant unless it adds to the understanding of women's experiences.⁶⁹

Nineteenth-Century Modernity

As I mentioned above, the late-nineteenth century is often linked to the terms 'modernisation' and 'modernity' which, whilst compatible and often interchangeable, do need clarification. 'Modernisation' describes "the global process by which traditional societies achieve modernity."⁷⁰ It refers to: the establishment of key institutions which support participatory decision-making; a waning emphasis on sacred thinking and a growing emphasis on secular thinking; the spread of capitalist productive relationships, practices and institutions, which favour nationalist ideologies; an increasing division of labour, use of management techniques, improved technology and the growth of commercial facilities, within industry; increasing social and structural differentiation.⁷¹ The characteristics of 'modern life' are derived from factors such as: the physical sciences; industrialisation; technology; the increased tempo of life; power and class struggles; demographic upheavals; urban growth; mass communication; powerful nation states; mass social movements; and a capitalist world market. All these elements can be equated with 'modernisation'.⁷² In the wider context of modernisation there were inevitable changes in women's roles, such as their movement into the 'male' spheres of higher education, the paid labour force, and local and national politics. Growing economic independence and limited entry to previously male bastions of power and influence increased some women's expectations of more active roles. As a generic term, 'modernisation' is useful when talking broadly about accelerated social change over time.

69. The term 'sport' will refer to both organised competitive physical games and non-competitive forms of physical recreation involving a degree of skill (in the sense that 'mountaineering' would be considered a sport). This definition was derived from McCrone (*op. cit.*) and Kennard (*op. cit.*). Where there is reference to more sedentary practices, the term 'leisure' will be consciously employed.

70. Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Bryan S. Turner, *Dictionary of Sociology* (England: Penguin, 1984), 138.

71. Abercrombie, *et al.*, 1984, pp. 69, 138, 174, 188. I discuss below how 'modernisation' provides a context useful for understanding the issues surrounding women's cycling in the late-nineteenth century.

72. Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983), 16.

The meaning of 'modernity' is energetically debated; one of the main difficulties for scholars in defining the term is that the concept refers to something dynamic. As Harvey states:

modernity can have no respect even for its own past, let alone that of any premodern social order. The transitoriness of things makes it difficult to preserve any sense of historical continuity.⁷³

To help focus their definition of modernity, many scholars quote the poet Baudelaire (1821-1867) who wrote in his 1864 essay "The Painter of Modern Life":

By modernity I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable.⁷⁴

That the condition of modernity is characterised as ephemeral and dynamic seems undisputed.⁷⁵

Marshall Berman usefully identifies three phases which characterise modernity. The first phase he identifies starts at the beginning of the sixteenth century to the end of eighteenth century, when people were just beginning to experience modern life; the period around 1750, commonly referred to as the European Enlightenment, was characterised as a time where scientific revolution was the single most important factor shaping the new world views of the eighteenth century. The second phase, from the 1790s through to the end of the nineteenth century, was one of successive revolutionary waves: "Explosive upheavals in every dimension of personal, social, political life."⁷⁶ The year 1848 is often marked as a turning point in modernity by a number of writers (*e.g.*, Berman, Giddens, and Harvey).⁷⁷ Berman's third phase starts at the beginning of the twentieth century and is characterised by expansion of these changes on a global scale.

Another useful model is presented by Krishan Kumar, who characterises modernity as the point in history when people began to look with optimism towards the temporal future; when advances in early science created the possibility that the future would involve harnessing science, scientific knowledge and science products to a vast range of activities, from material production to organisations and management.⁷⁸

73. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1989), 11.

74. J. Mayne, ed., *'The Painter of Modern Life' and Other Essays* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1964), 13.

75. Harvey, 1989, 10.

76. Berman, 1983, 16-9.

77. Other writers come to similar conclusions. I found Berman's framework to be the most straightforward approach in describing the periods to which 'modernity' applies. See also Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Britain: Polity Press, 1990), and Harvey, 1989; Harvey contends that it was after 1848 that the Enlightenment notion of scientific supremacy began to break down (Harvey, 1989, 28).

78. Krishan Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society: New Theories of the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995). I am grateful to Bob Gidlow for alerting me to this source.

It is nineteenth-century modernity with which this research is concerned. Berman describes nineteenth-century 'modernity' as the experience of "space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils - . . . [an environment of] adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world - and at the same time that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are."⁷⁹ Giddens's work, *The Consequences of Modernity*, suggests a useful way of characterising nineteenth-century modernity, in identifying the following elements as significant: the pace of change; the scope of change; and the nature of modern institutions (*i.e.*, some forms which cannot be found in prior history, for example, the modern city).⁸⁰ Giddens correctly signals the concepts of space and time as crucial to understanding modernity. Empty space may be understood in terms of the separation of *space* from *place*, the latter suggesting the idea of locale, physical settings of social activity. In modernity, he argues, space and place cease to coincide; instead, places or locales are "penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them."⁸¹ In other words, what makes a physical space take on meaning is what happens in it - the social interactions that take place. This helps people determine where they may legitimately go, or to gauge how their presence in certain places might be judged.⁸²

There is significant agreement in the literature that modernity as a nineteenth-century phenomenon is a product of the city.⁸³ In his assertion that the everyday life of society must be scrutinised in order to gain a full understanding of modernity, Chris Rojek points to the sociology of George Simmel, who asserted that the stimulating experiences of the city (or metropolis) offered "ways of escape" to individuals oppressed by the nineteenth-century compartmentalisation of "time and leisure space from work time and work space." The simple interactions that people engaged, such as the "coquetry . . . between the sexes," provided a contrast to "the flatness and colourlessness of Modernity."⁸⁴

Other major characteristics of modernity focus on the new landscape: steam engines, railways, industrial zones, large cities, mass communications (newspaper, telegraph, telephone),

79. Berman, 1983, 15.

80. Giddens, 1990, 5.

81. *Ibid.*, 17-9.

82. For example, the High Street in nineteenth-century Christchurch could have been interpreted in a variety of ways, quite divorced from its form as a large stretch of dirt and gravel - other social and cultural forces, such as displaying social status, a place to shop, and a transferral point for travellers using public transport, impose multiple meanings on the High Street.

83. *e.g.*, Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 66; Chris Rojek, *Ways of Escape: Modern Transformations in Leisure and Travel* (London: Macmillan, 1993).

84. Rojek, 1993, 101-3.

strong national states, multinational companies, *etc.*⁸⁵ As a colonial outpost of Britain, these major characteristics rapidly transformed New Zealand from an isolated undeveloped country into a modern civilisation within a very short space of time, transformations which had taken centuries to evolve in Britain and Europe. In this research, 'modernity' will be understood to refer to a period of changing roles, the democratisation of public space, the speeding up of mobility and communications, and the increase of leisure time and activities. The phenomenon of modernity is thus one of the main conceptual frameworks for this research.

The late-nineteenth century was a time of significant social change, and has been partly characterised in the literature of modernity by the rise of the city and new directions in leisure. During this period, the city became synonymous with modern life. Its streets were a new blend of 'space' and 'place', a landscape with diverse possibilities: street walking, transport systems such as road and rail, shops (including large window displays to accommodate 'window shopping' and department stores with the comforts of music, food, heat, *serviçe*, new aesthetics), and public places to eat and gather, places of entertainment such as libraries, music halls, societies, *etc.*

City people represented diversity as well. 'Actors' in the city included con-artists, voyeurs, posers and flâneurs,⁸⁶ but legitimate female roles were confined to shoppers or transients 'passing through' the city to destinations on the other side. One of the focal points of modernity is the significance of the public arena and what happens in it. Public space is the pivotal theme in the explanation of why cycling was problematic for nineteenth-century society and, in association with ideals of contemporary femininity, it holds clues about why it was important for women to pay careful attention to their appearance and conduct in public.

City living provided new opportunities for leisure, which the middle classes discovered and enthusiastically embraced during the late-nineteenth century. In his study of sport and the English middle classes, John Lowerson identifies five characteristic themes for this period. First, forms of active recreation were used to differentiate the middle classes from other social strata. Second, the popularity of some sports fostered the emergence of wide-scale athletic entrepreneurship. This was a response to new ideas about disposable assets, notably time, space and income. Sport also encouraged "voluntaryism" in its participants, where clubs and sporting organisations "drew strongly on extant models such as the rational recreation societies and religious denominations." Finally, there was "comprehensiveness and variety" of pursuits

85. Berman, 1983, 18-9; Ryan, 1990; according to Ryan, the "provision of public space for women was a major civic project during the latter half of the nineteenth century." (Ryan, 1990, 78).

86. Literally, an idler.

available to all ages, abilities and incomes.⁸⁷ The same themes can be identified in New Zealand's nineteenth-century recreation history, as immigrants sought to re-create their former lifestyles in the new colony.

The work of historians and sociologists writing about modernity has consistently neglected to identify gender as a factor to help explain the different experiences of women and men in the context of modernity; that is, 'modernity' has been approached in a gender-neutral way. The literature of modernity addresses public transformations as if they only concerned men's lives. But modernity is far from a gender-neutral phenomenon. Although middle-class women's leisure shared the same social context as men, their experiences were quite different. When women decided to move into public space on their bicycles in more conspicuous ways, for example, they became the objects of derision in ways that men did not, catalysing debates about female propriety, the ramifications of which have persisted to this day. Prevailing medical opinion dictated women's 'natural' biological and physiological sporting limits; nevertheless physical activity amongst middle-class girls and women became very popular. Within these confines it developed and was fostered principally through physical education in schools where, in response to the universal criticism that physically active girls were 'mannish' or 'hoydens',⁸⁸ schools promoted grace, charm and moderation. By the 1880s, newly arrived middle-class British female immigrants may have already been exposed to this limited acceptance of female athleticism;⁸⁹ in the less socially oppressive context of the colony, women and girls probably felt freer to continue the pursuit of such interests.

The bicycle was a product of modern ideas, designs, and technology. A novel and revolutionary method of transport, the bicycle eventually came to symbolise freedom in a variety of ways: from spontaneous local travel, to carefully planned touring adventures; from a new skill to be mastered, to the potential for a career as a professional rider; from a mere utility, to an important symbol of social status. The bicycle was an expression of modernity, introducing the novelties of speed and independent mobility. It prompted further social changes by challenging conventional practices, beliefs and values. Initially, for middle-class women, the bicycle offered the opportunity to move spontaneously and independently beyond accepted geographic and social boundaries. Prevailing protocols ensured women's movements were explicitly limited to visiting, attending concerts, charity commitments or recreational outings, and usually with members of

87. Lowerson, 1993, 2, 21.

88. Derogatory term for a boisterous girl. Derived from the word 'heathen'.

89. For a discussion of British girls' physical education and sport in the 1870s and 1880s, see: Fletcher, 1985; Kathleen E. McCrone, "Play Up! Play Up! And Play the Game! Sport at the Late Victorian Girls' Public Schools," in Mangan and Park, 1987, 97-129; Jennifer A. Hargreaves, "Victorian Familism and the Formative Years of Female Sport," in Mangan and Park, 1987, 130-44.

their own social class. These excursions were normally planned in advance and executed in accordance with established rules of etiquette. The bicycle graphically represented a threat to the proprieties governing the behaviour and movements of middle-class women.

Women's Presence and Mobility in Public

The dominant concern of nineteenth-century middle-class women in public was to portray the unmistakable outward signs of their respectability by paying close attention to what they wore, how they behaved, where they went, and with whom. Since the mobility of respectable women in public was normally confined to reputable places, cycling offered the novel opportunity and means for women to explore hitherto unknown public spaces, where they were likely to meet strangers from another social stratum. To venture into questionable urban and peri-urban areas, and thereby stretch the bounds of propriety, women had to be conscious of the imperative to continue signalling respectability to ward off the unwelcome advances of strangers.

To help interpret the relationship between public space and femininity, I drew upon two other conceptual frameworks. The first, a model of the 'gender order' developed by Australian historian Jill Julius Matthews, offers a useful way of understanding the underlying tensions of women's cycling in late-nineteenth century New Zealand. According to Matthews, the gender order is an ideology of femininity and masculinity which establishes an ideal-type of woman and man, with an established inventory of attributes for each sex. Since the details of this inventory depend on factors such as class, race, age, locality, group status, and historical context, a number of feminine attributes can be established for any woman in any era. These attributes will be congruent with the social group to which the woman belongs. The *form* of the gender order varies according to time and place, but its *existence* is immutable. A multiplicity of roles is demanded of individual women, acknowledges Matthews, who postulates that each relational attribute of any individual woman (*e.g.*, working woman, wife, mother, working class, white) "is suffused with a particular set of ideals of femininity."⁹⁰ Using Matthews' concept of an inventory of feminine attributes, I constructed my own inventory of both the conventional and progressive nineteenth-century feminine attributes from contemporary etiquette manuals and essays as a useful frame of reference for this research (Figure 2).⁹¹

90. Jill Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 17.

91. I consulted more than fifty works, most of them contemporary essays, to construct this inventory. All are listed in the bibliography.

Conventional Femininity	The New Woman
<i>Accommodating</i> <i>Beautiful</i> <i>Domesticated</i> <i>Emotional</i> <i>Good-natured</i> <i>Inconspicuous</i> <i>Philanthropic</i> <i>Virtuous</i> <i>Vulnerable</i>	<i>Conspicuous</i> <i>Egocentric</i> <i>Healthy</i> <i>Independent</i> <i>Physically active</i> <i>Pragmatic</i> <i>Public</i> <i>Rational</i> <i>Usefully employed</i>

Figure 2: Inventory of Nineteenth-Century Feminine Attributes

Nineteenth-century feminine propriety prescribed specific behaviours for particular social situations to enable women to maintain a front of respectability wherever they went. The public presentation of self involved the transmission of non-verbal messages through outward appearances and manner in order to advise and influence others about how they were expected to respond to an individual's presence. In all social interactions, there was the potential to accidentally signal wrong meanings or for meanings to be misinterpreted, especially in urban public spaces, for rapid population growth in urban centres was bringing an increasing number of strangers into contact with one another, thereby introducing greater elements of uncertainty in the transmission and interpretation of signals. I will draw further upon this inventory in Chapter 4 particularly, and show how it was challenged by the ideology of the New Woman.

A second conceptual framework was drawn from Erving Goffman's study *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, which is concerned with the structure of social encounters.⁹² This framework was valuable for highlighting the delicate and intricate nature of heterosocial interactions between nineteenth-century female cyclists and their audience. The basic tenet of Goffman's dramaturgical perspective is that in any interaction, people put on a 'show' for each other, trying to manage the impressions others receive. The analogy of the theatre is used to describe the ways that individuals project images of themselves, usually for self-serving ends, because these will help to define the situation and create appropriate expectations.⁹³ Individuals conveying impressions are referred to as 'performers', whereas recipients of the messages are the 'audience'. The whole interaction is termed a 'performance'. Using Goffman's terms, nineteenth-century feminine propriety involved a set of performances,

92. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

93. Abercrombie, *et al.*, 75.

with both performers and audiences possessing a shared understanding of how performers should give their signals and how the audience ought to respond.

Managing the impressions another individual receives is important for a number of reasons. First, as I alluded to above, creating the right impression exerts the maximum influence a person can have over how another person responds to how one wishes to be treated. The audience is just as keen to know how to act towards the performer as the performer is keen to influence the impression received. As Goffman puts it:

When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him [*sic*] or to bring into play information about him already possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his attitude towards them, his competence, his trustworthiness, *etc.* . . . [This information] helps define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him. Informed in these ways, the others will know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response from him.⁹⁴

Second, the signals given by the performer are particularly useful when the performer and audience are unacquainted or do not know each other very well. Such cues allow observers to draw on their previous experiences of other individuals in roughly similar settings. More importantly, Goffman contends, cues allow observers to apply untested stereotypes when in the presence of strangers, on the assumption that "only individuals of a particular kind are likely to be found in a given social setting."⁹⁵ Finally, it is in the best interests of the performer "to control the conduct of others, especially their responsive treatment of him."⁹⁶ According to Goffman, this control is achieved "by influencing the definition of the situation which others come to formulate, and [the performer] can influence this definition by expressing himself in such a way as to give [the audience] the kind of impression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with his own plan."⁹⁷

One of the principal concerns of this research is how women cyclists managed their 'presentation of self' in the context of urban heterosocial encounters in New Zealand. In the first place, women had to consider their physical safety, for increasing numbers of strangers were freely congregating and mingling on the streets. The unequal sex ratio, with males outnumbering females, meant that there was a high likelihood of meeting male strangers, and was an incentive for middle-class women to think about how they presented themselves. There

94. Goffman, 1971, 13.

95. *Ibid.*

96. *Ibid.*

97. *Ibid.*, 15.

was also a gradual movement of the rural population into urban centres.⁹⁸ That women must inevitably mix with strangers on the streets was thus an accepted fact of life in the 1890s. Women also had to consider the threatening behaviour of men. Unwelcome attention such as staring, verbal abuse or jeering, was just as likely to be directed towards respectable women as not. Within easy earshot, unwelcome personalised comments were probably quite common.⁹⁹ As late as 1912, Max Herz, an English tourist, observed of Dunedin street life that, like everywhere else in the world, there "the much quoted man-in-the-street" leaned on verandah posts, watching the world go by; his remembrance of New Zealand street behaviour hinted at the presence of loafing men past whom women had to walk.¹⁰⁰ Finally, respectable women had to consider their moral safety and protect their reputations from unkind or damaging gossip. Being seen in the wrong places, or being out at the wrong time of day, might mistakenly signal an alternative performance.¹⁰¹

One of the first ways an audience learns how to respond to a performer is by reading the signals given off by the performer's appearance. Besides signalling the performer's social status, appearances give clues about the 'temporary ritual state' of the performer, *i.e.*, whether the performer is dressed for a formal social occasion, informal recreational activity, work, and so on. Appearances yield the most accessible clues about the performer, since they can usually be seen from a distance, allowing the observer time to decide how to prepare for the imminent encounter.

For the female performer in the nineteenth century, her costume most readily conveyed the desired impression. Once the art of appropriate dressing had been mastered, the performer

98. Erik Olssen, "Towards a New Society," in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. W. H. Oliver with B. R. Williams (Oxford: The Clarendon Press and Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1981), 251.

99. Jan Robinson's study of women and crime in nineteenth century Christchurch suggests that the streets were full of vagrant men and women who were routinely prosecuted for drunk, disorderly, obscene or indecent behaviour. Robinson's research shows that larrikinism was common on the city streets, not just in boys but was also fairly prevalent amongst girls, although it must be remembered that female larrikins were much more likely to receive publicity. Jan Robinson, "Of Diverse Persons, Men, Women and Whores: Women and Crime in 19th Century Canterbury" (M.A. thesis, University of Canterbury, 1983), 261-4.

100. Max Herz, *New Zealand: The Country and The People* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1912), 168.

101. Being careful to avoid being seen in the 'wrong' places was probably a more straightforward exercise for New Zealand women than for their British sisters, simply because the size of cities here was so much smaller. Clear cut zones of immorality were much more easily identifiable, and therefore easy to avoid, despite the fact that people from different class backgrounds probably lived in close proximity to each other and with less distinct geographical boundaries. James Watson, *Along the Hills: A History of the Heathcote Road Board and the Heathcote County Council, 1864-1989* (Caxton Press: Heathcote County Council, 1989), 47-9; Clyde Griffen, "Towards an Urban Social History for New Zealand," *New Zealand Journal of History* 20, no. 2 (1986): 127.

might attend to her conduct, her 'character' in all likelihood firmly established by her costume. Simone de Beauvoir observed that once a woman is "dressed," she "does not present *herself* to observation; she is like . . . the actor on the stage, an agent through whom is suggested someone not there - that is, the character she represents, but is not."¹⁰² Nineteenth-century middle-class women knew that they were playing at the role of 'lady,' and to that end, invested much time and expense in dressing for this part.

The *manner* of the performer conveys to an audience the intended role the performer will play in a social encounter.¹⁰³ An aggressive manner, for example, would signal that the audience is expected to fall in with the performer's wishes; on the other hand, an apologetic manner would suggest that the performer expects to follow the lead of others.¹⁰⁴ A person's manner, like their appearance, is a non-verbal signalling device, but is much more subtle; it therefore has a greater potential for being misread, especially from a distance.

Incongruence between appearance and manner is problematic for the observer, who needs to rely on being able "to place the situation in a broad category around which is easy for him [*sic*] to mobilise his past experience and stereotypical thinking."¹⁰⁵ Similarly, audiences expect some kind of consistency in manner with the setting in which the social encounter takes place; this subsequently makes any departure from the ideal type stimulating and interesting, attracting extra attention. Congruence is at the root of establishing and building a standard script for heterosocial encounters, the rules for which are clearly understood by both performers and the audience. Thus, as Goffman concludes,

. . . a given social front tends to become institutionalized in terms of the abstract stereotyped expectations to which it gives rise, and tends to take on meaning and stability apart from the specific tasks which happen at the time to be performed in its name. The front becomes a 'collective representation' and a fact in its own right.¹⁰⁶

In this way it is possible to see how women on bicycles in the early 1890s represented a serious incongruence, placing the audience in the dilemma of wondering how to respond to *apparently* respectable women (*i.e.*, respectably dressed) who conspicuously flaunted themselves for the sake of a questionable activity. This incongruence aroused enormous curiosity in observers, such was the immense departure from the expected performance of middle-class propriety.

Inevitably, people make mistakes in managing their own impressions or in reading the impressions of others. Mistakes may occur when a performer unintentionally expresses gestures

102. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 547.

103. Goffman, 1971, 35.

104. *Ibid.*

105. *Ibid.*

106. *Ibid.*, 37.

conveying incapacity, impropriety, or disrespect, by temporarily losing muscular control (*e.g.*, yawning, belching, making careless remarks, scratching, *etc.*). Mistakes may also occur when performers give the impression that they are too little or too much concerned with the interaction. Performers may make dramaturgical mistakes, such as preparing the setting incorrectly, preparing for the wrong performance, improper timing, *etc.*¹⁰⁷ As Goffman puts it, ". . . the impression of reality fostered by a performance is a delicate, fragile thing that can be shattered by very minor mishaps."¹⁰⁸

Misrepresentation, on the other hand, involves using devices deliberately to mislead an audience. It is useful here to consider the misrepresentations commonly employed by nineteenth-century prostitutes who, by masquerading as respectable women, were able to attempt to seduce men in public relatively unobserved by those who did not recognise their imperfect performances as 'ladies'.¹⁰⁹ As Goffman observes, status is not always clear cut; respectable looking women are not always what they seem to be. In the 1890s, onlookers feared that the incongruent appearance and manner of cyclists in the public setting might cause some men to think that they were prostitutes.¹¹⁰

In order to minimise the negative effects of incongruity, performers employ defensive techniques and protective practices. It is in this role that etiquette manuals played an important part in nineteenth-century respectable society, advising both men and women how to convey accurate and clear impressions. Etiquette writers warned against committing indiscretions or distorting the intended impression, but in recognition that indiscretions did arise (usually by performer ineptitude), etiquette manuals also devoted significant space to advising audiences on when and how to exercise tact to save or resolve uncomfortable developments in situations. Manuals stressed that the responsibility for exercising tact lay equally with both sexes, who were advised on how to avoid the embarrassment that inevitably resulted from *faux pas*, unmeant gestures, inopportune intrusions and so forth. When mixing with strangers, in particular, the notion of self control was uppermost in respectable women's minds. Women endeavoured to

107. *Ibid.*, 60-1.

108. *Ibid.*, 63.

109. Misleading characters such as confidence men and imposters were also present on nineteenth-century New Zealand city streets.

110. Hugh Cunningham makes the point: "as a general rule . . . any woman in a public place of leisure, and unaccompanied by husband or other suitable male, was a prostitute." Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c. 1780-c.1880* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), chapter 3; quoted in Janet Wolff, "The Culture of Separate Spheres: The Role of Culture in Nineteenth-Century Public and Private Life," in *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 23. The bicycle was also adopted in nineteenth-century pornography and risqué vaudeville acts, both reinforcing and perpetuating the notion that the bicycle was morally questionable.

retain as much control as possible of the definition of the situation as a respectable heterosocial encounter; a woman's highly controlled behaviour made it clear to their male audience what role *he* was supposed to play. Self control was particularly important for female cyclists, who aspired to conserve their decorum amidst jeers and insults on the streets. Women maintained their social distance by preventing a redefinition of the situation to occur; they resisted all temptations to join their audience (and becoming what Goffman terms 'fellow team members') by returning insults or stares. The impact of the bicycle on women's presence in public is foreshadowed in Chapter 2, "Women in Public Before 1890," and subsequently is a major focus in Chapter 3, "Women's Cycling in New Zealand," and Chapter 4, "Debates About Women's Cycling." I return to Goffman's framework in Chapters 4 and 5, where I chart the transition from the initial rejection of women's cycling in the 1890s to its eventual acceptance in the early-twentieth century.

Duality of Bicycles: Transport and Recreation

A study of the evolution of the bicycle is necessary in order to appreciate its impact on the parallel development of both transport and recreation up to the beginning of the twentieth century. Attempts at inventing viable human-powered vehicles date back to Europe, *circa* 1650, when inventors began to experiment with treadles and cranks fitted to carriage designs in their efforts to conceive of a vehicle which could be propelled without horses. In the early 1800s, a 'running-machine' was invented in Germany; consisting of a wooden body above two wooden wheels set in line, the rider sat astride, pushing his feet alternately against the ground, propelling himself forward.¹¹¹

Such experiments culminated in the 1860s with the invention of the two-wheeled velocipede, characterised by pedals and cranks on the front wheel. The velocipede, the most reliable and accessible design to date, enabled large numbers of people to enjoy fast personal transport without the expense of capital outlay and the maintenance involved in keeping horses (such as feed, stabling, grooms, tack, costumes, *etc.*); likewise, it was more expedient than the alternative of hiring a carriage. This form of transport was highly popular in France, Belgium, Germany, the United States of America, and Britain, and was ridden for pleasure, business and sport by both men and women, for whom there were specific ladies' designs. The world's first

111. It was men rather than women who rode these machines. There is lively debate amongst cycle historians about the invention of the running-machine and, later, the velocipede. There is no dispute that these models, regardless of their exact origins, appeared around the dates mentioned above. I have drawn here on McGurn, 1987, which I consider to be one of the most informative histories of cycling, despite the existence of some factual errors which are acknowledged by McGurn himself (Pers. comm.).

successful cycling magazine, published in France in 1869, was *Le Vélocipède Illustré*, one of many subsequent publications which gave instructions about how to ride, maintain and repair the velocipede, as well as recounting stories of its international popularity, and the latest design modifications.

From 1869 to the end of the nineteenth century, a variety of two-, three-, and four-wheeled designs were used for transport, both in New Zealand and overseas.¹¹² They were used for travel within and between cities, competing in popularity with other road vehicles and public transport options, for example. Like the velocipede, bicycles (two-wheeled) were more accessible and convenient to use than horse-related travel. Bicycles were also used by businesses to deliver goods and messages quickly around cities, and were soon indispensable to the postal network. Additionally, there are numerous accounts of doctors, ministers of religion, nurses, teachers, clerks, and many other professional people using bicycles in their everyday working lives, as well as the use of bicycles by the military.

Throughout its evolution, the bicycle was popularly used for recreation and sport. Cycling quickly became a fashionable pastime amongst respectable people in New Zealand around the mid-1880s, by which time tricycle designs had stabilised and were more abundantly manufactured, and when the 'ordinary' (popularly known as the penny farthing) became popular with male riders. Although there are few accounts of early tricycling and velocipede riding, import figures, colonial reminiscences and photographs corroborate the more extensive British information, which shows that it was tricycling which was in vogue amongst middle-class women at this time. Tricycling remained the dominant form of cycling for women until the safety bicycle with the modified top cross-bar ('drop-frame') gradually gained acceptance from the early 1890s. The bicycle was considerably faster, lighter, easier to manoeuvre and more compact than the tricycle and, once a few brave pioneering women had demonstrated that it was simple to ride, other women soon followed suit. Its popularity for women, both in New Zealand and overseas, peaked around 1896-97 once this design was fitted with pneumatic rather than solid rubber tyres; this peak period of popularity is commonly referred to in the cycling literature as 'the bicycle boom'.

From the outset, cyclists embarked on day trips to the countryside, regularly venturing out twenty or thirty miles, as well as exploring the city streets for fun. More extensive tours of the country were also popular with both sexes, although they were more commonly undertaken by men. There are reports of women spending several months travelling over a thousand miles throughout New Zealand. I recount these kinds of adventures in Chapter 3. Competitive racing

112. Two-wheeled = bicycle; three-wheeled = tricycle; four-wheeled = quadricycle.

prevailed as largely the preserve of males. Internationally, women raced as early as 1868 in France, but in New Zealand the first expression of interest was in 1892. Both road and track racing became popular aspects of cycle racing, and the few women who competed in New Zealand entered both kinds of races. I discuss women's cycle racing in Chapter 3 also.

The Medical Debates About Female Exercise

Scientific arguments were used to rationalise and legitimate almost every aspect of Victorian life. The ideal social characteristics of women were assumed to have a deeply rooted biological basis,¹¹³ an attitude which prevailed in both North America and Britain, and was sustained in medical opinion and practice in late-nineteenth century New Zealand.¹¹⁴ Most historians who have examined the nineteenth-century medical debates about women and exercise agree that "physicians largely ignored or distorted scientific evidence,"¹¹⁵ creating a new series of myths to "explain and justify social judgements" which were deemed facts.¹¹⁶ Physicians thus used their privileged position to establish themselves as moral guardians of women's bodies, propounding medical theories to support social prescriptions about what the female body was intended for and should aspire to.

The common view of nineteenth-century woman was that she was the 'weaker sex'.¹¹⁷ The medical profession focused its attention on her 'innately' physical and emotional vulnerability, and justified its advice and decisions on the basis that women's physiological 'inferiority' was biologically based. Late-nineteenth century physicians perpetuated and adapted popular mid-century theories of human physiology to explain the emanation of disease and ill-health in women, as well as to argue against women's education and physical recreation.¹¹⁸

113. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Women and Their Role in Nineteenth-century America," in Mangan and Park 1987, 13-4.

114. Roberta J. Park, "Sport, Gender and Society in a Transatlantic Victorian Perspective," in Mangan and Park, 1987, 59; Sandra Coney, "Health Organisations," in Else, 1991, 241-4; Andr e Levesque, "Prescribers and Rebels: Attitudes to European Women's Sexuality in New Zealand, 1860-1916," in Brookes, Macdonald, and Tennant, 1986, 1-12; Erik Olssen, "Women, Work and Family: 1880-1926," in *Women in New Zealand Society*, ed. Phillida Bunkle and Beryl Hughes (Auckland: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), 159-83.

115. Vertinsky, in Mangan and Park, 1987, 258.

116. McCrone, 1988, 192; other historians in accord with this view include Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Roberta Park, Jennifer Hargreaves, Shelia Fletcher, Helen Lenskyj, and Janet Sayers.

117. For a discussion of how this view developed since the 1870s see Patricia Vertinsky's chapter "The Thirty-year Pilgrimage: Exercise in the Prime of Life," in *The Eternally Wounded Woman*, 1989, 69-87.

118. The North American doctor, Benjamin Rush popularized the theory that women were thin and weak because of the constant demands made upon their bodies by their reproductive system. This

(continued...)

The influence of doctors extended well beyond a concern for the wellbeing of individual women to pervade other aspects of women's lives, including their recreation, education, and employment, as well as impinging on women's moral and spiritual welfare.

Not only were biological differences and limitations evoked to dictate women's exclusion from various physical activities, they were also used to assign to women social roles and behavioural characteristics on the basis of gender. Scientific Darwinism, in particular, "provided apparently solid justification, as well as moral support, for traditional arguments about women's inferiority, proper sphere and 'highest function' as the guardian of the quality of the race."¹¹⁹ With an optimistic interpretation of biological determinism, health reformers in the 1890s borrowed from Social Darwinism. They promoted healthful exercise to build a stronger and fitter race (the 'survival of the fittest'), by developing individuals' willpower ('struggle') to improve their evolutionary chances. "Since only the fittest parents would pass on their acquired superior health to their children in the march to a perfect race, mistreatment of one's body amounted to a calculated mistreatment of one's progeny."¹²⁰ As future mothers, then, women had a duty to build up their energy and strength, to make them fit for their inevitable role as the bearers of the race.

In the final thirty years of the nineteenth century, doctors began to encourage moderate sport and exercise for women, believing that "physical activity would provide the strength and muscle to improve women's maternal function."¹²¹ This development occurred simultaneously in North America and Britain, and was well established by the time women began cycling in New Zealand. By the 1890s, moderate exercise was believed to promote emotional as well as physical wellbeing, and was suggested as a therapeutic remedy for 'nervous' disorders. In New

118(...continued)

vitalist theory was based on a doctrine that regarded "the emanation of disease as a result of an imbalance among the systems of the body or between the body and the environment." (Vertinsky, 1987, 262). Advanced education or physical pursuits would rob women, especially adolescent girls, of the vital energy required to develop their reproductive systems, there being only a finite amount of energy available to each individual. The intimate link between women's reproductive organs was "the basis for the 'reflex irritation' model of disease causation so popular in middle and late nineteenth-century medical texts . . . Any imbalance, exhaustion, infection or other disorders of the reproductive organs could cause pathological reactions in parts of the body seemingly remote." (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, 1987, 15).

119. McCrone, 1988, 203.

120. Vertinsky, 1987, 272.

121. *Ibid.*

Zealand, healthy living for women was widely promoted, and many women's social action and welfare groups embodied physical recreation components in their programmes of work.¹²²

As sport and physical activity became increasingly popular amongst women, doctors became concerned about the results of excessive participation. Besides the growing rates of injury sustained during physical activity, physicians were convinced that excessive exercise brought on all kinds of physical disorders as well as taxing the nervous system. The major concern, however, lay with the negative impact that physical activity might have on the female reproductive system. Although muscle power was important for child-bearing, it was thought that developing the wrong muscles might impede foetal development during pregnancy by irreparably damaging the pelvic girdle. A parallel concern was that the increasing amount of time women spent exercising and playing sport left them with no time to devote to having and caring for a family. The issues about the vulnerabilities of women's bodies frame the context in which women's cycling was questioned; the details of how these debates were articulated in relation to women riding bicycles will be addressed in Chapter 4.

Women and Social Change

Women's lives were significantly affected by the widespread consequences of modernisation, such as changing social roles, the democratising of public space, speeding up of mobility and communications, increased leisure time and the rise of rational recreation. These changes were very much gendered experiences of modernity and, despite the contemporary debates about the increased equality of the sexes (including the 'different but equal' debate), women's experiences of modernity continued to be very much circumscribed by conventional ideologies of femininity, little altered by the opportunities promised by modernity.

The literature about modernity, however, does not explain adequately the experiences of the female cyclists I studied. It was Janet Wolff's statement that confirmed for me the familiar difficulty of generating an understanding of women's experiences based on literature that does not explicitly recognise gender as a factor:

The literature of modernity describes the experience of men. It is essentially a literature about transformations in the public world and in its associated consciousness.¹²³

122. Examples of such groups include the Young Women's Christian Association and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (Sandra Coney, 1986, 242; Simpson, 1984). Many church organisations also organised physical recreation programmes aimed at young people, to emphasise healthy living and development of character and willpower.

123. Janet Wolff, "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity," *Theory, Culture and Society* 2, no. 3 (1985): 37.

Feminist debate about the private *versus* public dichotomy of women's lives has progressed since Wolff made the statement above, in 1985. Mary Ryan's study of women in public, for example, traced this dichotomy from 1974, when Michelle Rosaldo argued that the basis of sexual inequality was "a pervasive association of women with private spaces and domestic functions and their parallel under-representation in the public realms where men spoke and acted authoritatively for the whole community."¹²⁴ By 1980, Rosaldo had begun questioning the value of the private/public dichotomy, as had other writers who have since developed it beyond that simplistic schema. Subsequent research provided valuable insights for my own understanding of urban public behaviour in the late-nineteenth century: Ryan's study of women in public in the United States of America between 1825 and 1880; Walkowitz's study of London in the late Victorian period; Smith-Rosenberg's interest in bourgeois discourse on gender, health and sexuality; and John Kasson's study of manners in nineteenth-century urban America.¹²⁵ Ryan's research was particularly significant because, in taking the public arena as her starting point, she examined the extent to which the nineteenth-century city was a 'man's world', and in what kinds of activities women were engaged in public. Similarly, Smith-Rosenberg's focus on female sexuality significantly enhanced my appreciation of just why bicycle riding was so problematic, especially if rational dress were worn.

In the new urban landscape of shops, theatres, transport systems, museums, offices and restaurants, Walkowitz has identified many new female public figures, among them 'business girls', who were neither prostitutes nor ladies, women who had been hitherto the only legitimate public *persona*. Walkowitz argues that in this new urban landscape "[no] figure was more equivocal, yet more crucial to the structured public landscape of the male flâneur, than the woman in public," and in public, "women were presumed to be *both endangered and a source of danger* to those men who congregated in the streets As symbols of conspicuous display or of lower-class and sexual disorder, they occupied a multivalent symbolic position in this imaginary landscape."¹²⁶ Similarly, Ryan remarks that "the endangered lady was clearly of the middle and upper classes," whereas the dangerous woman came from the poor and working classes.¹²⁷ As Walkowitz notes, the prostitute was the "quintessential female public figure." She was a public symbol of vice, providing "a stark contrast to domesticated feminine virtue as

124. Ryan, 1990, 4-5; Ryan is referring here to Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview," In *Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview* (California: Stanford University Press, 1974), 17-24.

125. Ryan, 1990; Walkowitz, 1992; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985); Kasson, 1990.

126. Walkowitz, 1992, 21. Emphasis mine.

127. Ryan, 1990, 73.

well as to male bourgeois identity."¹²⁸ Similar figures populated urban centres in New Zealand and so the studies of Walkowitz and Ryan can help to construct the context in which New Zealand women rode their bicycles. As this study will demonstrate, like other public women, female cyclists were seen as both vulnerable to the dangers of the city and a source of danger, threatening to disestablish the prevailing gender order.

Opportunities for education and employment, together with increased social rights and the rising pressure of the female suffrage movement, served to expand women's roles beyond the traditional confines of the domestic sphere. Taking advantage of improved public education and access to higher education, women became more articulate and active in public affairs, lobbying for legislative change and organising themselves into associations for social improvement. For example, they became active in promoting the social welfare of women (*e.g.*, the Women's Christian Temperance Union; the Young Women's Christian Association; the National Council of Women; the Society for the Protection of Women and Children). The issues of social reform centred on child labour, property rights, fertility, temperance, prostitution, divorce, violence to women and children, infant nutrition, and welfare, *etc.*, logical extensions of women's domestic sphere of influence.¹²⁹ Since middle-class women were principally the prime movers of social reform, this role in itself represented a liberation from the narrow set of roles formerly assigned to them: inconspicuous, dependent, docile, demure, domestic, and decorative. The re-organisation and rationalisation of social functions executed in accordance with the principles of democracy are typical features of modernisation. By the end of the nineteenth century a picture of the modern, progressive woman had emerged. She was active, independent, and articulate, and the term 'New Woman' was coined to represent these qualities. It was in this context that women's interest in physical activity burgeoned. It is therefore not surprising that cycling prevailed as a metaphor for the New Woman. However, cycling as the symbol for the New Woman was problematic for both cyclists and their audience, and this will be addressed in Chapters 4 and 5.

The expansion of women's roles beyond the private sphere of the home brought women into urban public space.¹³⁰ Regardless of their class position, women in public were nevertheless vulnerable:

Being out in public, observes Richard Sennett, was for a woman to enter an immoral domain 'where one risked losing virtue, dirtying oneself, being swept into a 'disorderly

128. Walkowitz, 1992, 21.

129. Charlotte Macdonald, *The Vote, the Pill and the Demon Drink: A History of Feminist Writing in New Zealand 1869-1993* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1993).

130. Pollock, 1988, 56 *ff.*

and heady swirl.' By venturing into the city center, women entered a place traditionally imagined as the site of exchange and erotic activity, a place symbolically opposed to orderly domestic life This cityscape of strangers and secrets, so stimulating to the male flâneur, was interpreted as a negative environment for respectable women, one that threatened to erase the protective identity conferred on them by family, residence, and social distinctions."¹³¹

The real dangers to respectable women were significantly reduced with the development of new public and commercial facilities in the city. Urban philanthropy, for example,

depended on new public services and transportation that facilitated the movement of respectable women across urban spaces. Ladies' kiosks, new cafés and teashops, the use of buses, department stores where women could meet their female friends unchaperoned were as 'important', argues Leonore Davidoff, in freeing middle-class women from strict social rituals as the slow erosion of chaperonage.¹³²

There was much confusion over the identity of women travelling without companions or chaperonage. Harassment of respectable women was not uncommon in the nineteenth-century city. In large cities such as London, for example, prostitutes masqueraded as 'ladies', and respectable *bona fide* 'ladies' window-shopping at their leisure were frequently mistaken for prostitutes;¹³³ likewise, in New Zealand, women were conscious of their vulnerability on the streets.¹³⁴ Strategies to help women deal with harassment could be found in the pages of society magazines and etiquette manuals. Early in their adolescence, girls were taught to attend to the finer details of their appearance and movements; a thorough and superior knowledge and observance of the distinguishing gestures of a lady would hopefully identify the real lady from an imitation. Such training required a great deal of time to master, and great self-discipline to act out.¹³⁵ Kasson's study recites the particulars of etiquette, highlighting the necessity for excessive and obsessive attention to detail in public behaviour, from little things such as an "impertinent glance, an unwelcome compliment, . . . through gradations to the ultimate violation in rape."¹³⁶

The writers of etiquette manuals asserted that safety would be guaranteed if the rules of etiquette were scrupulously observed. Conversely, by implication, any disrespect a woman

131. Walkowitz, 1992, 46. Walkowitz cites Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 1973; Edith Wharton's novel, *The Age of Innocence*, provides a vivid study of social status, family connections, reputation and public behaviour. I am grateful to Dr. Maureen Montgomery for suggesting I read Wharton's novel.

132. Davidoff, 1973, 67, cited in Walkowitz, 1992, 46-7.

133. Walkowitz, 1992, 50.

134. e.g., Robinson, 1983; Herz, 1912.

135. Thorstein Veblen argues that since the acquisition and display of [ritualised] manners takes time, only those who can afford not to work for their living can spend time in acquiring them.

136. Kasson, 1990, 129.

encountered was *ipso facto* deserved.¹³⁷ The attention to detail found in the literature of etiquette and conduct was essentially information about public survival, the "social armour against intrusion."¹³⁸ Thus the ability and confidence to get around in public places "became the hallmarks of the modern woman . . ." and their scrupulous observation of "standards of public decorum in dress, manner, and movement" was thought to help them avoid unwanted male attention.¹³⁹ Etiquette manuals were popular tools which helped people negotiate the ambiguities arising from the erosion of heterosocial rituals in this time of great change. Whether by design or by accident, however, women on bicycles defied existing conventions, and established instead a whole new set of ambiguities to be negotiated.

Research Objectives

This research aims to identify and explain the nature of the public outcry against New Zealand women's cycling in the late-nineteenth century. Highly visible in their innovative costumes, women on bicycles successfully challenged prevailing beliefs about nineteenth-century femininity and helped legitimate women's right to occupy public space. In interpreting the controversies provoked by women on bicycles, this research brings together contributions from the modernisation and feminist historical literature. To fully appreciate the impact of female cyclists, my discussion in Chapter 2 focuses on New Zealand women's presence and conduct in urban public space *before* they began riding the bicycle in the early 1890s.

137. See, for example, Kasson, 1990, 129.

138. Kasson, 1990, 116.

139. Walkowitz, 1992, 68.

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN IN PUBLIC SPACE BEFORE 1890

To understand the debates central to women's cycling during the 1890s, it is important to identify the conventions which circumscribed the public presentation of middle-class New Zealand women and their mobility before that period. This chapter is divided into two distinct sections, each exploring a particular context in which to better appreciate the responses to women's cycling. The first section appraises the idea of the public presentation of self, through both personal display (*via* clothing and conduct) and conventions for social interaction with members of the opposite sex. The second section examines the movement of middle-class women in public, and is divided into three parts: women's access to and use of urban transport; the nature and extent of their physical recreation activities; and the affirmation of cycling as a male activity. The emphasis here in discussing mobility is on *how* women attained mobility, rather than *where* women went. I have anticipated many of the concerns of this chapter in Chapter 1; in this chapter, I extend and elaborate upon those themes.

The Presence of Women in Public

When respectable middle-class women presented themselves publicly, they paid great heed to the conventions governing their appearance, their conduct, and the propriety of their social interactions. Pioneering middle-class women struggled with the difficulties of colonial life in New Zealand to maintain British ideals of middle-class respectability which they had formerly observed in their country of origin. These ideals were reinforced and passed down to their New Zealand-born daughters. In practice, conventions were adapted and modified to better suit the New Zealand context, and their application varied considerably amongst women. That is, what was prescribed by etiquette writers was not necessarily what happened in practice.

Conduct and Appearance

For New Zealand middle-class women, the way they appeared and behaved in public was of paramount importance. Vulnerable to the physical and moral dangers inherent in public space, they relied on elaborate codes of conduct to shield them from the unwelcome intrusions of strangers. Their dominant concern was to signal their gentility and, to this end, women conscientiously studied the rules of etiquette for important information: what was appropriate

to wear in public, where it was expedient to go, in which activities it was fitting to engage, and how to interact with members of the opposite sex. To be inconspicuous was a desired goal; a *respectable* lady was unobtrusive and acted always to avoid inappropriate attention.¹ Meticulous attention to the symbolism of clothes and manners signalled important information concerning class and status to others in the public arena.²

As a visual cue, clothing offered the most immediate information concerning female respectability. The ability to conform to the dictates of fashion was one way of attesting membership of the middle classes. During the 1850s, petticoats were increasingly added to give fullness to skirts, until the crinoline superseded them in the 1860s, maintaining the appearance of fullness without the weight of the fabric.³ As trade flourished and global communications gradually improved during the 1860s, news of British fashion trends spread more quickly. By the time such news reached far-flung colonies such as New Zealand, the time delay in fashions was negligible.⁴ The popularity of the crinoline was followed by a sheath-like princess dress (without bustle) during the early 1880s, with skirts held close to the knee in front by ties, restricting the stride when walking. By the late 1880s, the bustle once again came into vogue, and corsets pushed up the bustline, tightly compressing the ribs, diaphragm and internal organs. Sleeves began to be fuller, skirts reached the floor for indoor wear or were an inch off the floor for outdoor wear, and tailored jackets had come into vogue at the end of the 1880s.⁵ It is obvious that when women began to ride tricycles in the mid-1880s, the fashions mitigated against a comfortable and safe ride. Exertion would have been difficult given the tightness of upper-torso clothing, and long skirts would have made managing pedals or cranks hazardous.

Colonial fashions both echoed overseas fashions and reflected a combination of imported styles and materials adapted to suit local conditions. Writers of emigration manuals dictated

1. This was a common dictum of etiquette discourse, and all manuals conveyed this message. See, for example, *Australian Etiquette, or the Rules and Usages of the Best Society in the Australasian Colonies, Together With Their Sports, Pastimes, Games and Amusements* (Melbourne: People's Publishing Company, 1886. Facsimile edition. Melbourne: J. M. Dent, 1980). This book, compiled "expressly as a household treasure for Australian homes," or books like it were probably available to New Zealanders. I am grateful to Ron Sheppard, Melbourne, for introducing this book to me and lending me his copy.

2. Roberta Nicholls, "Élite Society in Victorian and Edwardian Wellington," in *The Making of Wellington, 1800-1914*, ed. David Hamer and Roberta Nicholls (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1990), 200-2.

3. Prior to 1840, skirts were somewhat shorter than they were to be for the rest of the nineteenth century. The fabric was draped from the high waists fashionable at this time with the effect that the dress appeared to be almost all skirt. Alison Drummond and L. Drummond, *At Home in New Zealand: An Illustrated History of Everyday Things Before 1865* (Auckland: Blackwood and Janet Paul, 1967), 111.

4. Drummond and Drummond, 1967, 128.

5. Judy Grossbard, *Style Changes in American Women's Sportswear From 1881-1910* (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University College of Human Sciences, 1990), 29-33.

colonial fashions to some extent, advising 'expedient' clothing suited to the harsh conditions the settlers would face. Garments were to be practical, versatile, and attractive.⁶ Colonial women kept abreast of fashion by observing the clothing of new immigrants, and by reading the latest illustrated magazines.⁷ Middle-class women frequently wrote home requesting more fashionable clothing be sent out. One new immigrant, for example, wrote asking her sister in Scotland to send a new riding hat:

That one you sent out is very pretty but the young ladies in Dunedin come out so strong that it would create the smallest bit of sensation, so you must get something taking.⁸

Although unable to rival the fashions of London and Paris, New Zealand's 'colonial style', more colourful and gay than was customary in 1850s England, was considered in advance of overseas fashion; bolder patterns and more vivid colours impressed newcomers to the colony.⁹ Not everyone thought New Zealanders fashionable, however. Sarah Courage, newly arrived in Canterbury in 1864, frequently remarked that the fashions were very much out of date, for example.¹⁰ In contrast, Lady Barker, who was considered by her peers to be "best up in the latest fashions," reassured her readers that, in the rural context at least, "[a] lady wears exactly what would be suitable in the country in England . . ."¹¹ Charlotte Godley astutely observed that colonists wore whatever they happened to have on hand, whilst at the same time steadfastly observing the etiquette of the occasion.¹²

The dictates of some fashions between the 1840s and 1880s severely impeded physical movement. Some actions were impossible; stepping up into carriages or trains was difficult, for example. Tightly-laced corsets significantly affected stamina and breathing, and some designs made it impossible to raise the arms above shoulder height. The role of the vulnerable and

6. Drummond and Drummond, 1967, 117-8; Jane Malthus makes the point that there is evidence that the occupation of dressmaking expanded during the colonial period, implying that there was some interest in keeping up with changing fashions, and argues that otherwise, "purely functional garments could continue to be made within the family economy." Jane Malthus, "Picking up Pins? The Search for Dressmakers in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand," *Stout Centre Review* 1, no. 2 (1991): 3-8.

7. Jeanine Graham, "Settler Society," in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, eds. W. H. Oliver and B. R. Williams (Wellington: Oxford University Press / Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1981), 112-39; colonial reminiscences indicate that anticipating the receipt of the latest magazines was very exciting, and that such magazines were widely read, e.g., Mary Anne Barker, *Station Life in New Zealand* (London: Virago, 1984), 52.

8. Eileen L. Soper, *The Otago of Our Mothers* (Dunedin: Otago Centennial Historical Publications, 1948), 56.

9. Drummond and Drummond, 1967, 136; Soper, 1948, 56.

10. Sarah Courage, *Lights and Shadows of Colonial Life: Twenty-Six Years in Canterbury, New Zealand*, 2d annotated ed. (Christchurch: Whitcoulls Publishers, 1976).

11. Barker, 1984, 100, 66.

12. Helen M. Simpson, *The Women of New Zealand* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1962), 123-4.

helpless female was easy to play when normal and everyday movements were impeded in these ways.¹³ The idea of a middle-class woman mounting and riding a velocipede, tricycle or bicycle is difficult to countenance in the context of such confining fashions.

How women behaved and the types of activities in which they participated in public also revealed their measure of respectability which, in part, signalled the response they expected from others. Female respectability was also measured by the kinds of places women visited in urban settings. Respectable women knew which places to frequent, and at what times of the day or night to be seen in those places. When they ventured out, respectable women seldom went unaccompanied, particularly if they were unmarried. An appropriate person such as an older married woman (usually a mother or an aunt), a suitable male relative, or, for high-society women, a hired chaperon was mandatory. It was acceptable for women to promenade along the main street, or in other places such as public parks and gardens known to be popular with respectable people, or to pay visits to friends and acquaintances. Members of New Zealand's social élite endeavoured to preserve familiar social practices such as holding 'At Homes', and hosting private dinner parties, dances and balls.¹⁴ And because of the somewhat loose social boundaries defining the social élite of nineteenth-century New Zealand, it can be argued that members of the middle-classes also mixed and mingled in these same settings.¹⁵ Public eating places such as restaurants, cafés and bars were, on the other hand, considered inappropriate for respectable women; nor were music halls or other 'dubious' forms of entertainment deemed suitable.

Although immigrant women in New Zealand continued to observe faithfully the conventions familiar to them, some conventions were no longer practical or appropriate in the colonial context.¹⁶ Wealthy Hannah Barton fascinated her visitors by her incongruent table

13. It was to address problems associated with dress that Rational Dress Societies were established. The English Rational Dress Society (founded c.1887 by Viscountess Harberton) produced the first issue of its *Gazette* in 1888. The first issue outlined cases where current fashions had been responsible for serious, sometimes fatal, accidents and illnesses. Incidents such as these included references to working-class women whose clothing made their work more difficult (e.g., trying to stoop over whilst wearing corsets) or who lost employment through clothing-related industrial accidents. *Rational Dress Society's Gazette*, no. 1 [1888], 2-3.

14. Nicholls, 1990.

15. Nicholls, 1990, 197; James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders* (Auckland: Allen Lane / The Penguin Press, 1996), 321.

16. It is important to remember that etiquette advice was prescriptive rather than *descriptive*; many stories in colonial memoirs and letters illustrate individual departures from prescribed behaviours; e.g., the actions of Hannah Richardson, Mary Rolleston, Hannah Seymour, for example, recounted in Frances Porter and Charlotte Macdonald, eds, *'My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates': The Unsettled Lives of Women in Nineteenth-century New Zealand as Revealed to Sisters, Family and Friends* (Auckland: Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books, 1996), 152.

setting, for example: "silver sugar basin and rusty iron salt spoons, silver table spoons and common brassy looking forks and old tin tea pot."¹⁷ Although Hannah Barton could have afforded to set a more congruous table, she obviously felt no need to augment her status with a display of gentility. For other women, abandoning some conventional practices may have been consistent with their desire for a more egalitarian society. Maria Richmond, for example, deplored rigid distinctions:

I don't mean to say I think there is to be no division of labour or distinction of class (the total want of the former here leads to a terrible waste of time), but that things in England are only going too far and that there is an unnatural division between the served and the servers which is, I verily believe, wicked and unchristian.¹⁸

Preoccupation with the demands of surviving and of establishing homes in their new country, whilst potentially a novel challenge,¹⁹ did little to diminish these women's efforts to preserve their feminine attributes, however. They had come to New Zealand at a time when British class distinctions were prominent and when outward appearances were still prime indicators of social status.²⁰

Because of the comparatively small size of New Zealand towns, the activities available to middle-class immigrant women were somewhat limited and truncated versions of those they had enjoyed before emigration. In the early years of settler society, the shops in the main street may have been the only suitable places to go. One observer wrote of Dunedin in the early 1860s:

On warm afternoons, the principal thoroughfare, Princes Street, reminds one of its Edinburgh prototype, being crowded with gaily dressed loungers, principally female, who strive to persuade themselves that into the wilds of Otago they have brought that civilising crinoline which is sure to change the desert into a garden. Until six o'clock p.m., the general dinner hour, the promenaders are afloat, seeing and being seen . . .²¹

Although social circles were smaller, and choice of activities limited until cities in New Zealand grew, colonial memoirs nevertheless tell of a giddy round of activities reminiscent of a full social life before emigration. Attendance at these events continued to be an important consideration in the social calendar of immigrant middle-class women. Regattas, race days,

17. Porter and Macdonald, 1996, 150, 169-70.

18. *Ibid.*, 160.

19. Raewyn Dalziel, "The Colonial Helpmeet: Women's Role and the Vote in Nineteenth-century New Zealand," in *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand*, ed. Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald, and Margaret Tennant (Wellington: Allen & Unwin with Port Nicholson Press, 1986), 61.

20. Nicholls, 1990, 151-3.

21. Soper, 1948, 67.

garden parties and balls were all important happenings to be seen at.²² As cities grew, facilities such as parks, gardens, marine parades, department stores, libraries, theatres, and art galleries offered respectable women the opportunity to expand their spatial horizons.²³ As domestic servants became increasingly available through the assisted immigration of single working-class women, urban middle-class women were less confined to the private world of their homes, and were able to enjoy the expanding social pleasures of urban living. For rural settlers, the costs associated with visiting nearby towns had to be considered. Lady Barker, for example, seemed to thoroughly enjoy getting away from her farm to visit Christchurch, but the high cost of cab-hire there made her decide to give up returning calls.²⁴

At all times, middle-class women were mindful of the need to confine their movements, spatially and temporally, to the places where they were expected to be seen. Seeing and being seen were an accepted part of urban street culture in early New Zealand, and for the respectable woman, were strictly bounded by propriety. Meeting particular standards of conduct and appearance was only one part of establishing middle-class female respectability; how women interacted with members of the opposite sex adds another dimension.

Heterosociability

The impact of the new social interactions between the sexes after women began cycling in public are better appreciated if we understand how the sexes were formerly expected to interact. Respectable British citizens diligently observed the conventions of heterosocial interaction which were widely published in etiquette manuals regularly updated to reflect the latest beliefs about appropriate social behaviour. As well as advising women, etiquette manuals also informed men about the roles they were expected to play. To become acquainted with the minutiae of social practices was a laudable aim, for the more the details could be mastered, the more clearly a woman could signal her position of social superiority, and thereby assert her control over the definition of the situation. Codes of conduct were thus vested with the power to protect women from disagreeable approaches by strange men.

Social relations between women and men were governed by a prescribed set of instructions for every occasion and circumstance. At a general level, etiquette governing

22. Graham, 1981, 129-30; Scott A. G. M. Crawford, "'One's Nerves and Courage are in Very Different Order Out in New Zealand:' Recreational and Sporting Opportunities for Women in a Remote Colonial Setting," in *From 'Fair Sex' to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Eras*, ed. J. A. Mangan and R. J. Park (London: Frank Cass, 1987), 161-81.

23. Simpson, 1962, 105.

24. Barker, 1984, 41.

heterosocial interaction focused on a long list of themes: introductions and greetings, topics of conversation, how to listen, where to direct one's gaze, managing unforeseen meetings with the opposite sex, physical proximity and the limits of physical contact, gracefulness in carriage, gossip, respecting privacy, expressing opinions, vulgarities, receiving and offering gifts, governing emotions, giving precedence to others, and so on.²⁵

The topic of suitable public activities was addressed in etiquette manuals. Public places of amusement, such as opera, concerts, theatre, fairs, riding or driving [horses], dinner parties, receptions, parties, balls, sporting events (e.g., horse racing and regattas), and pastimes (e.g., swimming, boating, hunting, archery, tennis, golf, and croquet) were all examples of situations where it was proper for women to interact with men.²⁶ Each kind of heterosocial activity was governed by a unique set of formal rules of conduct.²⁷

Since the issues surrounding women's cycling were raised in connection with their presence in urban public space, the etiquette of the street (including the etiquette of riding and driving) is relevant to this research. The rules for street behaviour varied according to the level of acquaintance between any particular man and woman encountering each other. During the 1880s, an etiquette manual written and published expressly for the Australasian colonies, advised women and men on points of street etiquette, amongst many other themes; it also included suggestions about when it might be appropriate to depart from strict English etiquette. The chapter, "Etiquette of the Street," comprehensively covered the following topics:

The street manners of a lady; Forming street acquaintances; Recognizing friends in the street; Saluting a lady; Passing through a crowd; The first to bow; Do not lack politeness; How a lady and gentleman should walk together; When to offer the lady the arm; Going up and down stairs; Smoking in the streets; Carrying packages; Meeting a lady acquaintance; Corner loafers; Shouting in the street; Shopping etiquette; For public conveyances; Cutting acquaintances; General suggestions.²⁸

25. I observed these themes after a comprehensive survey of British etiquette manuals; all sources I consulted are listed in the bibliography.

26. Courtship, which was treated as a separate topic in etiquette manuals, is not a strong focus in this research, because it addresses *intimate* behaviour between acquainted young people, rather than the *superficial* social interaction that takes place with strangers or acquaintances. Courting behaviour that occurs in the street or in the context of cycling, however, will be addressed where relevant.

27. Since we know that both immigrant and native-born New Zealanders had access to British etiquette manuals, it is safe to assume that British etiquette was familiar to colonists. Colonial reminiscences, as I have shown, also bear this out. A good example of a comprehensive British manual is *The Etiquette of Modern Society: A Guide to Good Manners in Every Possible Situation* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., [1881]).

28. *Australian Etiquette*, 1886, Table of Contents. No etiquette manuals written specifically for New Zealand have been found. There is evidence, though, that English etiquette was perpetuated through the pages of society magazines, and that some English manuals found their way to the colony.

The "Street Manners of a Lady" strongly advised inconspicuous behaviour:

The true lady walks the street, wrapped in a mantle of proper reserve, so impenetrable that insult and coarse familiarity shrink from her, while she, at the same time, carries with her a congenial atmosphere which attracts all, and puts all at their ease.

A lady walks quietly through the streets, seeing and hearing nothing that she ought not to see and hear, recognizing acquaintances with a courteous bow, and friends with words of greeting. She is always unobtrusive, never talks loudly, or laughs boisterously, or does anything to attract the attention of the passers-by. She walks along in her own quiet, lady-like way, and by her pre-occupation is secure from any annoyance to which a person of less perfect breeding might be subjected.

A lady never demands attention and favours from a gentleman, but, when voluntarily offered, accepts them gratefully, graciously, and with an expression of hearty thanks.²⁹

With such a strong emphasis on exercising discretion it is clear that pioneering female cyclists, no matter how gracefully they rode, or how appropriately they dressed, were unable to avoid drawing attention to themselves.

Gentlemen played a complementary role in street etiquette. They were to take the initiative in any actions which would assist or protect women, but were to allow women to initiate and determine the *nature* of any social intercourse, such as the duration of the interaction and level of its intimacy.³⁰ The etiquette of riding and driving gave men ample opportunity to display their chivalry. Women relied on men to assist them in mounting their horses, adjusting the stirrups and arranging the drape of their riding habits. Men were to provide the same assistance in dismounting. When riding with a woman, men were advised to ride on the offside (righthand side) so that their horse could not rub up against the female rider, nor spatter her skirts.³¹ It was the woman who determined the riding pace. If, when riding alone, a gentleman met a lady out walking and who wished to converse with him, he was required to dismount and remain on foot while talking to her. When driving, gentlemen were required to offer the choicest seats to ladies; if there were only one gentleman and lady riding together, they sat opposite each other unless the lady invited the gentleman to sit beside her. As with mounting and dismounting, men assisted women into and out of carriages, taking care that their dresses were not damaged nor left hanging outside the carriage.³²

Immigrants to New Zealand endeavoured to continue practising the etiquette with which they were familiar. The freer association amongst the classes in the colony and the less well-defined social circles forced settlers to interact, united in their common hardship and isolation.

29. *Ibid.*, 152-3.

30. *Ibid.*, 153 ff.

31. Since women rode sidesaddle, their legs and skirts draped over the left side of the horse.

32. *Australian Etiquette*, 1886, 182-7.

Ironically, new immigrants frequently remarked that New Zealand colonial women paid more attention to etiquette than did their British sisters, despite the necessity of adapting some practices to suit colonial circumstances,³³ and that standards were very high. One writer, for example, decided that in Dunedin there was as much etiquette about visiting and so on, as she ever saw anywhere at Home.³⁴ But other new settlers remarked that people tended to interact more informally than they were used to, possibly because people genuinely believed that New Zealand was a social utopia, in which all citizens were of equal standing.³⁵ Comparisons of etiquette practice between Britain and New Zealand were commonly expressed; the differences were explicitly noted in the *Australian Etiquette* to help colonists decide on appropriate points of departure. For example,

In England strict etiquette requires that a lady, meeting upon the street a gentleman with whom she has acquaintance, shall give the first bow of recognition. In Australia, however, good sense does not insist upon an imperative following of this rule. A well-bred man bows and raises his hat to every lady of his acquaintancè whom he meets, without waiting for her to take the initiative.³⁶

This advice was sensible for a small population, where only a few people were likely to be walking along a street at any one time; for a gentleman to ignore a woman's presence in that context was probably ruder than initiating an acknowledgement.

The need to be accompanied in public was especially relevant in the colony. After the gold rushes of the 1860s, when the proportion of the New Zealand European population living in urban centres increased from 33.8 percent in 1861 to 45.5 percent in 1891,³⁷ the ratio of males to females altered with the influx of several thousand prospective miners.³⁸ Dunedin, for example, already a major town in the colony, grew into a flourishing urban centre following

33. Stevan Eldred-Grigg, "'The Beauty and Fashion of the Province': Women of the Landed Gentry of Canterbury, 1880-1910," in *Provincial Perspectives: Essays in Honour of W. J. Gardner*, ed. L. Richardson and W. D. McIntyre (Christchurch: University of Canterbury, 1980(a)), 74-90; Eldred-Grigg, *A Southern Gentry: New Zealanders who Inherited the Earth* (Auckland: Heinemann Reed, 1980(b)); Eldred-Grigg, *Pleasures of the Flesh: Sex and Drugs in Colonial New Zealand, 1840-1915* (Wellington: Reed, 1984); Drummond and Drummond, 1967; Soper, 1948.

34. Soper, 1948, 55-6.

35. Graham, 1989, 133-4; see also settler reminiscences such as Sarah Courage, *Lights and Shadows of Colonial Life*; Ellen Shephard Tripp, *My Early Days* (Geo. R. Joyce, 1915); E. M. L. Studholme, *Reminiscences of 1860* (Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs Limited, n.d.); Mary Anne Barker, *Station Amusements in New Zealand* (London: Macmillan, 1873) and Mary Anne Barker, *Station Life in New Zealand*; Porter and Macdonald, 1996; and A. E. Woodhouse, ed., *Tales of Pioneer Women* (Hamilton: Silver Fern, 1988, reprint facsimile of the second revised edition of 1940; first published by the Country Women's Institutes, n.d.).

36. *Australian Etiquette*, 1886, 154. There were probably many other parochial adaptations for colonial etiquette.

37. Graham, 1981, 135. An urban centre is defined as a place with a population over 1,000.

38. John V. T. Baker, "Population," in *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, ed. A. H. McLintock, vol. 2 (Wellington: R. E. Owen, Government Printer, 1966), 830.

the gold rushes of Central Otago, and was the most populated town between 1861 and 1881.³⁹ Women remained a significant minority until the 1890s, despite programmes of assisted immigration between 1850 and the late 1880s which brought into the colony thousands of single women.⁴⁰

Whatever the local adaptations, though, improper behaviour certainly did not go unnoticed. In 1860s Dunedin, for example, one observer commented that it was "not at all unusual to see respectably dressed females making exhibitions of themselves in the street - anything but womanly."⁴¹

Changing social practices in New Zealand took place within the broader cultural changes associated with the modernisation of Western societies in the late-nineteenth century. The impetus for such change in practices had been steadily gaining momentum since the 1850s, mainly through the publication of various articles and pamphlets on the theme of social reform.⁴² Etiquette manuals, however, consistently resisted new ideas, and continued to promote conventional heterosocial practices. Standards of conduct, even where they were modified in the colonial context, remained relatively stable and unchallenged until the final decade, when debate about women's social and political emancipation came to a climax, and middle-class women availed themselves of the new opportunities for self-expression.

Having examined the nature and significance of the conventions which dominated women's public presentation of themselves and their interactions with the opposite sex, the discussion will now turn to the second major background theme: the physical mobility of middle-class New Zealand women as it relates to (1) their use of urban transport and (2) their participation in physically active recreation.

39. Graham, 1981, 117.

40. Barker, "Population," 829; Charlotte Macdonald, *A Woman of Good Character: Single Women as Immigrant Settlers in Nineteenth-century New Zealand* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin and Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs in association with the Port Nicholson Press, 1990).

41. Soper, 1948, 66.

42. Many women were active in promoting social change through writing and publishing pamphlets and articles from the 1850s. For example, Mary Muller, wrote under the pseudonym 'Femina' for the *Nelson Examiner*, and did so without her husband's knowledge. Her ideas on married women's property rights were influential in initiating related legislation. In 1869 she wrote "An Appeal to the Men of New Zealand," a treatise on women's suffrage (Aorewa McLeod, "Mary Ann Muller, 1820-1901," 461-4); Mary Taylor wrote, in 1870, about the need for every woman to independently earn her own living and to avoid having to marry (Pat Sargison, "Mary Taylor, 1817-1893", 657-60); Mary Ann Colclough became a public figure, a social reformer lecturing on the evils of drink, and working for the rehabilitation of women ex-prisoners and prostitutes, as well as arguing for the necessity of women's economic independence, particularly married women (Judy Malone, "Mary Ann Colclough, 1836-1885," 142-5); in *The Book of New Zealand Women / Ko Kui Ma Te Kaupapa*, ed. Charlotte Macdonald, Merimeri Penfold, and Bridget Williams (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1991).

Women and Mobility

The movement of middle-class women in urban public space prior to 1890 was a gendered experience, reflected in the transport they utilised and the nature of their physical recreation. Cycling in this period was a decidedly masculine activity.

Transport

Between the early days of European settlement in the 1840s and 1890, urban transport options for middle-class women evolved from negotiating ill-defined tracks on foot to riding along well-established roads in stylish horse-drawn vehicles which they or their families owned privately. Most early settlers had come from a world in which horse-drawn transport was well established and sophisticated, only to arrive in a wilderness where land transport was primitive, and horse-drawn vehicles a rarity.⁴³

No matter what their social status, early pioneering women had no alternative but to walk, sometimes long distances, along tracks cut through the landscape. Essentially, roads were bullock-tracks which served walkers and vehicles alike. They were dry, hard and dusty in summer, wet, boggy and muddy in winter. Dunedin, for example, situated on both hilly and flat land, was known as 'Mudedin', so bad were the ground conditions.⁴⁴

As horses became increasingly available from the 1850s, riding, both for utility and pleasure, was a welcome alternative to walking, and significantly expanded the horizons of middle-class women. Horses were expensive to begin with, a hack costing as much as £50, but wealthy people typically owned three or more.⁴⁵ Riding for enjoyment, therefore, was practised by men and women from affluent families, the women riding sidesaddle. Sarah Courage wrote of leisurely horseback riding in 1864:

. . . we had some delightful rides round the suburbs of Christchurch together . . . we generally rode out two or three times a week . . . within a radius of six or eight miles.

43. The Australian colony had already established a reasonably sophisticated transport industry before New Zealand's colonisation. Mark Alexander, *Bullock to Brougham: Private Road Transport in Early Christchurch*, *On the Move: Christchurch Transport Through the Years*, no. 1, (Christchurch: Christchurch Transport Board and Tramway Historical Society, n.d.), 11; for a comprehensive history of New Zealand transport and society, see James Watson, *Links: A History of Transport and New Zealand Society* (Wellington: GP Publications, in association with the Ministry of Transport, 1996).

44. "A History of Cricket in Otago," Unpublished Manuscript, 1977, Chapter 2, 9, cited by Scott A. G. M. Crawford, "A History of Sport and Recreation in Otago, 1848-1888," Report of Proceedings, International Conference *History of Sport and Physical Education in the Pacific Region: Developments in the Past, Pointers for the Future* (School of Physical Education, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, 20-24 November, 1978), 183.

45. A hack is a horse suitable for riding at a walking pace. Alexander, *Bullock to Brougham*, 8. Alexander notes that "the average yearly wage for a manual worker at this time was no more than about £50;" see also Belich, 1996, 377 ff. for a useful commentary on prices and wages.

By this means we saw a great deal more of Christchurch and its surroundings than we otherwise should have done. Occasionally we met huge wagons, with teams of eight or ten bullocks; then we met a smart English landau and pair of good-looking chestnuts, driven by the 'groom and gardener' . . . we passed elegant-looking villas with their pretty-laid-out gardens filled with bright flowers . . .⁴⁶

Owning and driving a stylish vehicle quickly became an important status symbol, and middle-class people were expected to possess at least one fashionable conveyance, such as a waggonette, brougham, or victoria. Buggies, sulkies and dog-carts were also popular with this social stratum.⁴⁷ The costs of ownership extended beyond the price of horses, tack, and carriages, to include stabling, feed and grooming.⁴⁸ Private vehicles represented a step toward easier mobility, freedom and individual comfort, as well as status.

In urban areas, horse-drawn trams, omnibuses and cabs principally served the public's transport needs from the late 1870s to the late 1890s. In Christchurch, for example, an extensive system of steam- and horse-drawn tramways began in 1880, radiating out from the Square, reaching New Brighton by 1887, Sumner by 1888, Shirley and Burwood by 1893, Hoon Hay by 1896.⁴⁹ Photographs of the period show large numbers of women using trams and omnibuses. Steam trams drew considerable objection from their competitors, the cab owners, and from citizens because of the soot and cinders or because they frightened the horses.⁵⁰ Public transport, however, was inconvenient and inflexible compared to the benefits of privately owned vehicles; in addition, hired vehicles were not an option for upper levels of society.⁵¹ Middle-class New Zealand women probably aspired to travelling in privately owned vehicles or, where this was not possible, to hiring a vehicle for their exclusive use. To ride on urban public transport was probably an option exercised by few women of this status who, when they

46. Courage, 1976, 33.

47. Alexander, *Bullock to Brougham*, 12.

48. Ammonia vapours from dung and urine affected coach varnish. The more wealthy could afford to build separate stables and coach houses so that vehicles and horses were separated. Peter Cuffley, *Buggies and Horse-drawn Vehicles in Australia* (Victoria: Pioneer Design Studio, 1981), 32.

49. Graham Stewart, *The End of the Penny Section: When Trams Ruled the Streets of New Zealand*, rev. ed. (New Zealand: Grantham, 1993), 231-2.

50. Norman Watkins, "Transport: Tramways," in *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, vol. 3, 444.

51. Although Australian, the following example is probably representative of New Zealand families. One family in Melbourne, in the 1880s, noted: "We kept two riding horses and a dog-cart, which prevented our having to hire a carriage when we went out, which was the greatest expense for visiting; £2/10/- is frequently the charge for conveyance to and from a party." By modern values, this hire charge was more than \$A200. They also used the nearby river, hiring a boat at a shilling per head, "it being much more agreeable to them than the omnibus service at sixpence per head each way to the city." Cuffley, 1981, 32.

travelled between cities, rode on steamships and trains enjoying the privileges and comforts of first-class travel.⁵²

Physical Activity

Urban middle-class women's physical recreation was confined to informal activity, non-competitive games, or genteel sports. In the early years of settlement, their opportunities were inevitably limited, but as the colony became better established, more and varied opportunities for physical recreation arose, along with an increase in leisure time.

Many physical activities required no formal organisation, and were usually pursued with family members or close friends. Walking, boating⁵³ and riding for pleasure required only mild exertion and little preparation, and were considered suitable leisure activities for middle-class females of all ages.

Non-competitive sports and games required a little more preparation to organise venues, participants, and equipment. Church picnics or anniversary day celebrations provided a context for novelty races such as the egg and spoon race, contests of skill between the sexes (*e.g.*, threading-the-needle or hammering-the-nail), and games and dances, such as weaving the maypole. Again, these kinds of activities involved females at all stages of life, from young children to grandmothers.

For school girls, appropriate physical activity was promoted through physical education.⁵⁴ The passage of the *Education Act 1877* provided free, secular and compulsory primary education; included in the *Act* was provision for physical training for boys. Influenced by the work of overseas mentors such as Madame Österberg, Ling, Jahn and others, however, many schools recognised the value of physical exercise for girls. One of the first such mentors was Oscar David, a Swiss physical educationalist, who arrived in New Zealand in 1878 to share his philosophy of physical education. He taught gymnastics to girls at Otago Girls' High School and Dunedin Training College from 1879 to 1882, and publicly commented on the deleterious

52. Watson, 1996, 154; Trevor K. Snowdon, "Railways, Rationality and Modernity" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Auckland, 1992).

53. Women were admitted to rowing clubs as honorary members and were, as such, permitted to use only the 'pleasure' boats. J. O. Renault and A. M. Brough, *The History of Canterbury Rowing Club: Prepared for its 125th Anniversary, 1886-87* (Christchurch: Canterbury Rowing Club, [1986], 75ff.

54. A comprehensive history of girls' physical education in New Zealand has yet to be written. See Catherine Smith, "Control of the Female Body: Physical Training at Three New Zealand Girls' High Schools, 1880s-1920s," *Sporting Traditions: Journal of the Australian Society for Sports History* 13, no. 2 (May 1997): 59-71, and Ruth Fry, "Calisthenics to Canoeing," in *It's Different For Daughters: A History of the Curriculum for Girls in New Zealand Schools, 1900-1975* (Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1985), 123-43.

effects of poor posture, faulty sitting positions, and the dangers of women's corsets; like his contemporaries, he linked girls' physical well-being to their potential as mothers.⁵⁵

Formally organised sports of a genteel nature were also part of the repertoire of middle-class women's physical recreation. By the 1880s, middle-class Victorian Englishwomen were becoming more involved in sports such as croquet, tennis and archery, and interest in these was transported to New Zealand with female immigrants.⁵⁶ A substantial magazine and book literature grew commensurately, conveying not only the rules of sports, but also information about how to dress and behave, *i.e.*, a sporting etiquette quickly emerged. Such genteel sports were normally pursued for social rather than competitive purposes. Tennis in particular, for example, brought together people of like mind and social rank in the context of leisure rather than competition. Tennis parties were staged in the grounds of private homes, and provided exclusive opportunities for the exchange of important social information, as well as opportunities for the sexes of the same social rank to meet one another.⁵⁷ Some women played championship tennis from the foundation of the New Zealand Lawn Tennis Association in 1886.⁵⁸ Finally, it is reasonable to assume that some middle-class women may have enjoyed swimming in public pools from as early as the 1860s, for the sexes were safely separated by differently allocated hours of use; women did not begin swimming competitively until after the beginning of the twentieth century.

Occasionally respectable women pursued activities considered less than genteel. In the 1850s, for example, some women went tramping and climbing for pleasure.⁵⁹ In 1865, the *New Zealand Herald* reported that at the Auckland races, ". . . some fair equestriennes did a good deal of racing upon their own account, for they could be seen galloping along the course at full speed in twos or threes or fours . . ."⁶⁰ The majority of middle-class women, however, pursued activities which were deemed appropriate to their social position.

55. Oscar David, "Physical Education: Paper Read at the Otago Educational Institute," 2nd November, 1889, Normal School, Dunedin (Dunedin: Fergusson and Mitchell, Manufacturing Stationers, 1889).

56. Golf did not become popular for women in New Zealand until the 1890s. Russell, Teresa G. "Grace and the Fairways: The History of New Zealand Ladies' Golf" (Special study, School of Physical Education, University of Otago, 1979).

57. Brian Stoddart, "Sport, Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response in the British Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society* 30, no. 4 (1988): 657-8.

58. Paul Elenio, *Centrecourt: A Century of New Zealand Tennis, 1886-1986* (Wellington: New Zealand Lawn Tennis Association Inc., 1986); Jenny Barclay, "An Analysis of Trends in New Zealand Sport from 1840-1900," Research essay, Massey University, 1977, 57-8.

59. Albert Shaw, "A Cricketer's Reminiscences", 1898, cited in Barclay, 1977, 60; Pip Lynch, "A History of Women Mountaineers in Victorian New Zealand Society" (Special Study, Faculty of Physical Education, University of Otago, 1985).

60. *New Zealand Herald*, January 5, 1865, cited in Barclay, 1977, 59.

The way in which women conveyed themselves through public space, and the physical activities in which they chose to participate, were gendered expressions of middle-class propriety. Their choice of transport and recreation pursuits involved a careful consideration of how to signal the messages of respectability. At the same time, these women were not insulated from the appeal of new pursuits, which by the 1890s were growing more novel and numerous. Flo Derry, for example, wrote to her English cousin Harry expressing a desire to play rugby and conveyed her belief that within her lifetime, it would be a socially acceptable thing to do.⁶¹ Compelled to align themselves with the social élite, middle-class women subscribed to the latest fashions, ideas and pastimes which acted as symbols of superior status during the 1880s. One of the novel activities middle-class women tried was cycling, first on tricycles from the late-1880s, then on bicycles from the early 1890s.

Cycling as a Male Activity

Before women began riding bicycles in the 1890s, the hazardous road surfaces, dense and erratic traffic and the design of cycles, together with accepted practices of female leisure, reinforced the belief that cycling was a dangerous activity, and therefore unsuited to ladies.⁶² Poor road conditions were potentially treacherous to all road users. Early roads were notoriously hazardous; in muddy conditions, wagons could easily sink up to their axles. In Christchurch, however, roads were in comparatively good condition, and well-suited to cycling by the 1880s.⁶³ Access across waterways in cities was by primitive bridges, sometimes for foot traffic only, but more usually shared with horses and vehicles. Early cyclists had to negotiate around quagmires, balance carefully on shingle and stony surfaces, and put up with dust and potholes on dry roads. Although early bicycle transport did not have as great an impact on road development as it did in Britain, settlers' experiences of bicycles and horses did lead them to draw attention to the conditions of roads, and to call for harder surfaces to suit these modes of transport.⁶⁴

A disregard for the few established traffic regulations also contributed to the risks of road use. In the very early days, owners of carts and drays, which were used for both public

61. Derry family letters, 1879-1937 (MS papers 1043), Alexander Turnbull Library, cited in D. Meads, P. Rainer, and K. Sanderson, comps., *Women's Words: A Guide to Manuscripts and Archives in the Alexander Turnbull Library Relating to Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Wellington: National Library of New Zealand, 1988), 23.

62. See Figure 2, Chapter 1.

63. M. Moseley, *Illustrated Guide to Christchurch and Neighbourhood* (Christchurch: J. T. Smith, 1885), 212-3.

64. Dudley Chapman, "Roads," in *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, vol. 3, 93.

and private transport, moved on the roads wherever they liked. Traffic congestion in larger cities was sometimes chronic. By-laws were introduced in Christchurch in the 1860s to reduce traffic problems. Despite such regulatory aids, the chances of accidents and collisions between pedestrians, cyclists, horses and vehicles, particularly at intersections, were high.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the designs of the cycles themselves, especially two-wheeled models, increased the potential for danger.

Velocipedes (first imported in 1869), and later tricycles, quadricycles and high bicycles (introduced in the 1870s and 1880s), offered a convenient and efficient alternative to horse-powered travel. Early cycle models, however, were heavy, cumbersome, and unwieldy. Ideally they required a hard road surface free of ruts to ensure a safe ride. As a result, cycle transport was principally used for limited local travel, although sometimes men undertook 'record breaking' long journeys all over the colony. Tricycles offered women a safer, but limited, cycling experience. Evidence in the form of photographs and texts show that women rode tricycles usually as tandem or sociable models, and they therefore required a partner to accompany them.⁶⁶ Women's tricycles were usually propelled by treadles rather than pedals and cranks, a design which safely accommodated their ground-length skirts.⁶⁷ In all probability, women rode their tricycles purely for recreation rather than utility, and on quiet streets on the perimeter of the town. Women were not numerous as a population of riders; twenty years after the first bicycles and tricycles were imported it was still an unusual sight to see a woman on a tricycle or a bicycle.

Men's recreational cycling became formalised in the 1870s, with the formation of three cycling clubs: the Dunedin Cycling Club [1876], the Auckland Amateur Athletic and Cycling Club [1877], and the [Christchurch] Pioneer Bicycle Club [1879].⁶⁸ In less populated areas,

65. Alexander, *Bullock to Brougham*, 11.

66. On a tandem one rider sits behind the other; on a sociable, riders sit side by side.

67. *Press*, 17 August 1869, 2. I found little information about women tricycling in New Zealand, but this does not necessarily suggest that women's tricycling was unpopular. Newspaper indexers do not necessarily indicate the presence of women in index entries if they consider the information insignificant. Similarly, contemporary reporters did not tend to report much on women's cycling activities. In a thorough search based on the index entries for cycling in the *Press*, 1860-1892, I did not find one report which mentioned women until the formation of the Atalanta Ladies' Cycling Club in August, 1892, although it is clear that women were cycling before this date. More detailed scrutiny of newspapers would be desirable for future cycling history research. Appeals to descendants of early cyclists might prove fruitful for tracing artifacts and documents.

68. These dates are given by *The New Zealand Metropolitan Cycle Show, Christchurch, November 6 to 13, 1897*, Catalogue, 1897, 89-93, and are probably incorrect. The catalogue identifies the Auckland club as the "oldest." Actual dates were unable to be verified in any of the early almanacs or directories, the *New Zealand Cyclopedia*, and nor were the newspapers I consulted able to verify consistently these dates.

cycling clubs began as sections within athletics or football clubs, and later developed into clubs in their own right. Women were frequently invited to accompany men on shorter club runs; they were also able to join many of these clubs as associate members, but did not have the rights to full membership until they began to form their own clubs. The all-female Atalanta Cycling Club, which was established in Christchurch in 1892, was believed to be the first all-female cycling club in the world. Other all-female clubs were gradually developed in each of the major centres of the country. I discuss the development of women's cycling clubs in Chapter 3.

Conclusions

As the colony of New Zealand established basic social institutions such as trade and commerce, and as transport and communications systems became more reliable and widespread, settlers and their descendants increasingly enjoyed opportunities for recreation. For many British female immigrants, reliable and comfortable urban transport was reminiscent of what they had left behind. Advances in girls' physical education in New Zealand, however, kept pace with British developments. In addition, colonial women were necessarily more physically active, having a greater involvement in domestic work (especially if in an isolated rural setting), and having to walk or ride to their destinations as often as not.⁶⁹ Colonial women were, nevertheless, surprisingly mobile, given the hardships of travel before 1890.⁷⁰

Velocipedes were imported to New Zealand only months after they reached England from France, in 1869, and at all stages of the cycle's evolution, New Zealanders rode the latest models. It appears that many women may have embraced the tricycle until the early 1890s, when occurrences of women riding bicycles were reported in the *New Zealand Wheelman* and the *New Zealand Cyclist* to be as evident in New Zealand as anywhere else in the world.

I have highlighted aspects of the conventions governing female behaviour and appearance in public for which cycling was to prove problematic. Cycling in the late-nineteenth century consisted of two unique qualities that were bound to draw comment: first, it was a very public activity, and second, it was a completely novel form of movement, both as an example of technology and as an activity for women. Women's increasing presence in the public domain

69. A neighbour of Henry Sewell, Mrs Cookson, walked from Lyttelton to Christchurch and back in a day to go to a dance (Watson, 1996, 34). A survey of traffic across one bridge in central Christchurch during eight hours in January 1862 counted 1,000 foot passengers, but only 199 saddle horses, despite the bridge being on a major arterial route into town (Alexander, *Bullock to Brougham*, 11).

70. See, for example, Courage, 1976; Frances Porter, *Born to New Zealand: A Biography of Jane Maria Atkinson* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin / Port Nicholson Press, 1989); Barker, 1984; Watson, 1996.

took place in the context of a modernising society, where spatial movement *per se* had increased because of developments in transport technology. Cycling posed new threats to contemporary social protocol, such as the assumption that respectable women were potentially endangered if they appeared in public without a companion. The momentum of public disapproval of women's increasing forays into public space grew when they abandoned the tricycle of the 1880s in favour of the drop-frame safety bicycle in the early 1890s. This model was lighter, more manoeuvrable and more affordable. These qualities, together with the techniques of mass production and marketing, spawned such an exponential increase in female cycling such that, by the mid-1890s, public parks and streets were full of women on bicycles.⁷¹ Subsequently, changes in mobility significantly altered patterns of kinship, work, travel and recreation.⁷² Expanding spatial boundaries represented one kind of social freedom for women. Throughout the middle- and late-nineteenth century, progressive women and men also challenged the economic, political and educational boundaries of women, championing the cause for female emancipation.

Once cycling had become more popular with women, many were no longer content to ride at set times in the confines of pre-designated locations, but embarked on journeys around town, through the countryside, across the nation, and for some, all over the world. Nor were all women content to ride only at a leisurely pace or wear modest costumes; some insisted on fast riding, wearing bifurcated costumes (some of which were brief and scanty by contemporary standards), and racing in velodromes. Such freedom of movement was soon linked, both literally and metaphorically, to the growing crusade for women's social emancipation. In this context, Chapter 3 examines the emergence and development of women and cycling in New Zealand.

71. This trend occurred simultaneously in Britain, Europe, America and Australasia.

72. Peter Perry, "Working-class Isolation and Mobility in Rural Dorset, 1837-1936: A Study of Marriage Distances," *Transactions* no. 46 (March 1969): 121-41. Perry discusses the role of the bicycle in increasing the opportunities for marriage outside localised communities; Interview, Blanche Thompson (née Lough), 1962. Radio New Zealand Sound Archive.

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN'S CYCLING IN NEW ZEALAND

In the late-nineteenth century, the introduction of the bicycle added a new dimension to the lives of New Zealand middle-class women and played an integral role in social change at a time when prevailing values and conventions pertaining to women were being challenged and debated. An embryonic interest by women in cycling in the early 1890s developed into a consuming passion during that decade, despite intense and vigorous disapproval by various sectors of society. By the turn of the century, the sight of a woman on a bicycle no longer aroused strong, negative emotions; the social climate had changed to the extent that a woman's presence in public was customary. In this chapter I document and examine New Zealand women's experiences of cycling in the 1890s, including their introduction to the activity, what the bicycle enabled them to do, and the problems they encountered. I also signal for discussion in Chapter 4 the issues which arose in response to women's cycling.

Early Bicycles for Women

From 1869, when cycles were first introduced to New Zealand, women's interest in cycling grew exponentially. Subsequently stimulated by the manufacture and marketing of cycle designs specifically for women, the popularity of women's cycling burgeoned throughout the 1890s.

First Arrivals, 1869

Since 1869, with the arrival of the first velocipede in New Zealand, bicycles were available to women. An advertisement appearing in the *Southern Cross* in August 1869 advertised ladies' velocipedes which could be ordered directly from Britain.¹ I was unable to trace information

1. *Southern Cross*, 31 August 1869, 3. The advertisement reads as follows:

Velocipedes of every description, for gentlemen, ladies and children. Best forged steel, with brake, and best hickory wheels.

The French Velocipede Company, through their English Manufacturers, offer the very best Velocipede at prices from £10 to £14. Liberal terms to Importers. The Export and Shipping Department is under the care of [Tayffe] Brothers and Holman, of 10, Laurence Pountney Lane, London. The English Wholesale Agents are S. and E. Ransome and Co. All communications to be made to the General Manager, A. DAVIS, 14, Strand, London.

"The Velocipede, its history, and how to use it," can be obtained for 8d. of the Publisher of this Journal.

about women's cycling activities in New Zealand after 1869 until around 1892, when the newspapers first noted the appearance of women on bicycles. It is likely that a small number of women were riding tricycles (including sociables and tandems) in the intervening period; import statistics indicate that tricycles were imported during this time, and photographs show women riding tricycles.

Affordability and Relative Costs of Cycles for Women

The cycle industry's production of high cost, high quality machines suggests that women with access to disposable incomes were their intended market. Manufacturers took great pride in the quality of the finished product; care with enamelling and brazing processes, colours, and trimmings, produced an aesthetic and smart-looking machine. Quality appealed to affluent buyers, for whom the appearance of their new cycles was important.

The average price of bicycles dropped steadily during the 1890s from around £30 in 1893 to about £20 by 1900.² New bicycles were, without doubt, beyond the reach of the wage labourer, suggesting that it was only members of the bourgeoisie who could afford to purchase new bicycles.³

For others, the rapidly increasing second- and third-hand market in cycles was the only way to secure a machine, and since it was the vogue amongst the bourgeoisie to discard their bicycles in order to purchase the latest model each year, there was an abundant supply of used machines.⁴ Average prices of cycles and average wages indicate clearly that only women of means could afford a new machine. It is also evident, however, that not all women who purchased new bicycles were necessarily from the wealthiest backgrounds. New bicycles could

It is unclear from this advertisement whether women would obtain a two- or three-wheeled velocipede.

2. Women's bicycles were seldom advertised; and there was little mention of the price. In 1892, a man's Humber Pattern Rigid Frame cost £24, whilst in 1893, Adams, Curties and Co. advertised men's Humber for £30. Prices remained between £25 and £30 for the year, but showed a gradual decline at the end of 1894, and averaged approximately £20-22 for the rest of the decade.

3. *Official Year-books* annually detailed average rates of wages but, unfortunately, no comparable data exist for salaried professionals. Although wages varied from province to province, examples of wages in Canterbury in 1900 give some idea of the inaccessibility of new cycles to wage labourers: a male farm labourer with board might earn around £40 a year; a male shepherd with board might be paid around £65 a year. Servant wages ranged from £25 a year (nursemaids with board) to £75 (married couples without family and with board). Artisan labourers such as masons, plasterers, bricklayers, carpenters, smiths, coopers, wheelwrights, saddlers *etc.*, earned roughly £130-150 a year without board, and workers such as general labourers, seamen, miners, engine drivers, tailors, dressmakers and milliners earned roughly half the wages of artisan labourers. *The New Zealand Official Year-book*, 1901, 241-3. Wages cited here are composite estimates for a five-day, fifty-two-week working year. For a useful commentary on wages, see also James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders* (Auckland: Allen Lane / The Penguin Press, 1996), 377 ff.

4. Second-hand bicycles were about £10 cheaper than new ones.

be purchased 'on terms', allowing both women and men to pay for their machines over a period of time. Adams, Curties and Co. were the first to advertise a time-payment scheme in the *New Zealand Wheelman*, from five shillings a week.⁵ Before long, however, a more sophisticated system was established by the same company, requiring a £10 deposit and a monthly repayment of £2; the purchase price under this arrangement was ten *per cent* more expensive.⁶

Those content to ride a second-hand bicycle could advertise their buying and selling needs in the *New Zealand Wheelman*, which they did from as early as 1893. One of the earliest of such advertisements called for a "cheap lady's safety bicycle, second-hand, convertible machine," suggesting that this machine might be shared amongst family members of both sexes.⁷ As cycling amongst women became increasingly popular, the volume of advertisements for used cycles grew commensurately.

For those with no way of owning a bicycle, an uncomfortable ride on well-used hired machines was an option. Retailers were quick to capitalise on both the popularity and expense of cycling by offering bicycles for hire. This seemed to be a popular option, judging from the regular appearance of printers' advertisements in the *New Zealand Wheelman* and the *New Zealand Cyclist* for forms and record books designed to help retailers keep track of hire and machine maintenance details. Later in the decade, retailers and manufacturers regularly advertised cycles for hire in the cycling magazines.

Marketing Bicycles to Women

Despite the small market for women's bicycles in the early 1890s, manufacturers and retailers saw the potential for growth, advertising ladies' models in ways designed especially to appeal to women.⁸ Manufacturers were aware that one important consideration for women was the weight of a bicycle: heavy machines were difficult to manage on rough roads and women were

5. *New Zealand Wheelman*, 10 June 1893, 8.

6. *NZW*, 5 December 1893, 13. From this time on, manufacturers regularly published two price lists, one for cash buyers and the other for those wishing to buy on terms, appealing to people with smaller disposable incomes and capitalising on the popularity of cycling.

7. *NZW*, 27 May 1893, 13. Before ladies' models were produced in any great number, manufacturers made bicycles in which the horizontal bracing bar could be removed or added, to suit both female and male riders.

8. Most manufacturers and retailers were themselves keen cyclists and had introduced their wives and daughters to cycling. Those who had immigrated from England and were familiar with the sight of women riding tricycles, could see the advantages offered by bicycles, especially those with pneumatic tyres; undoubtedly they would have been able to envisage the potential market for women's bicycles. See Petty's discussion of market segmentation for the cycle industry, which, he argues, began in the 1870s (Ross Petty, "Peddling the Bicycle into the 1890s: Mass Marketing Shifts into High Gear," *Journal of Macromarketing* 15 (Spring 1995): 42.

additionally hampered by their cumbersome garments. Between twenty-five and thirty pounds was considered the optimum weight for ladies' cycles, with a recommended gearing of between sixty and sixty-six-and-a-half inches.⁹ Humber and Co. exploited the issue of weight, for example, when it marketed its ladies' models as 'Feather-Weight Ladies' Safeties'.¹⁰

The issue of weight continued to dominate advertisements for women's cycles until the use of pneumatic tyres shifted the focus to issues of appearance and comfort. An advertisement by Mason, Struthers and Co. for the 'Raglan Lady's Safety no. 54', for example, entreated women with these words:

Please compare the graceful appearance of the new bent tube frames with the old fashioned straight tube frames which are not now used by the Raglan Co. excepting on their cheapest machines.¹¹

Two years later, the company used the theme of comfort to advertise their 'Rover' model, simply exclaiming: "Every lady looks for comfort . . . They will fit you like a glove."¹² These models would have been fitted with the best Dunlop pneumatic tyres, a standard component from the mid-1890s, which ensured a softer and more comfortable ride.

Quality rather than cost remained the emphasis of advertisements for women's cycles, even when prices dropped towards the end of the 1890s. Affordability was couched in terms of 'value for money' rather than any bald reference to price. Mason, Struthers and Co., for example, advertised its 'Cleveland' cycles with the words: "Not how cheap! But how good! . . . Cheapness has never been characteristic of Cleveland bicycles, for they have always found plenty of buyers with discernment enough to know when they get their money's worth." Beneath the ladies' model were the words: "What is quality? Quality is an element of goodness which all desire and few obtain."¹³ Not surprisingly, the key figure in the centre of this advertisement was a respectable-looking woman on a bicycle, which reinforced an association between femininity, quality and goodness, and astutely avoided any hint of cheapness or vulgarity (see figure 3).

Design features of bicycles were also used to advertise bicycles to women. An 1894 trade catalogue for 'Star' safety cycles, for example, claimed to consider all the requirements of the lady rider: ample room between the handle bars and saddle "in order that the rider in mounting could easily take her seat . . . fitted handlebars to enable the rider to sit erect," and

9. Weights: *New Zealand Cyclist*, 4 September 1897, 5; 19 November 1898, 6; 31 December 1898, 6. Gearing: *NZC*, 11 September 1897, 5; 11 November 1899, 5.

10. *NZW*, 4 January 1899, 13.

11. *NZW*, supplement, 15 September 1897, 2. Mason, Struthers and Company was a Christchurch business.

12. *NZW*, 17 May 1899, inside back cover.

13. *NZW*, 1 July 1899, inside back cover.

THE NEW ZEALAND CYCLIST.

AMERICA'S BEST - - BICYCLE - - The "CLEVELAND"

WE desire to notify that we have been appointed **SOLE AGENTS** for the Middle Island of New Zealand for this unparalleled machine, and that our first shipment of 1899 cycles, which arrived by last 'Frisco mai steamer, are now on view and selling rapidly.

NOT HOW CHEAP! BUT HOW GOOD!



Cheapness has never been characteristic of Cleveland bicycles, for they have always found plenty of buyers with discernment enough to know when they get their money's worth.

The Cleveland bicycle is to-day's standard for excellence, and has more new and distinctive features than any other in the market.





WHAT IS QUALITY?
Quality is an element of goodness which all desire and few obtain.

WHY THE FEW?
Because quality means the use of the best of everything. For instance, in bicycles, it takes good material, good men, good thought, and good time to produce quality such as you find in the Cleveland.

Figure 3: Advertisement for 'Cleveland' Bicycle, 1899.
[Source: *New Zealand Cyclist*, 1 July 1899, inside back cover.]

dress guards.¹⁴ Accessories for women's cycles were promoted as essentially enhancing the riding experience. Tasteful designs in lights, bells, carriers, baskets, skirt guards, and ornamentation were marketed as necessities for the fashionable cyclist.

Cycling as Transport and Recreation

In the late-nineteenth century, cycling offered women a variety of opportunities and physical sensations which they had never before experienced, such as the thrill of speed, independent mobility, and the chance to explore beyond their customary spatial boundaries. This second section of the chapter examines the ways New Zealand women utilised the bicycle during the 1890s.

14. *'Star' Cycles Catalogue, 1894-95*, Adams, Curties and Co., Christchurch, 28. I am grateful to Keith Guthrie for lending me this catalogue.

The Popularity of Women's Cycling

Once cycling became popular with women, those who had not yet tried it found themselves increasingly in the minority, and sought to join the craze. In the early 1890s, only three or four women were seen riding bicycles in each of the four major centres but, by the end of the century, female cyclists were no longer an unusual sight anywhere in the country. The exception was Christchurch where, in early 1892, eight women were observed cycling.¹⁵ By December that year, however, numbers must have increased dramatically, for the *New Zealand Wheelman*, in recalling the early days of cycling, reflected that, whereas a few years previously, "when cycling was in its infancy in Canterbury," and was hardly mentioned in print media: "Today, a woman on a bicycle hardly creates little more attention than if on a horse . . ."¹⁶ Just a year later sixty were seen, four of whom were dress reformers. An article on cycling in the 1896 edition of the *Australian Review of Reviews*, called Christchurch women "pioneer female cyclists," and reported that they were a common sight amongst the estimated 4,000 cyclists in a total population of 51,000.¹⁷ Soon after, estimates of 500 women and a total of 6,000 cyclists in Christchurch were made.¹⁸ By mid-decade, numbers were gradually swelling in each of the four main centres, and by 1898, they had considerably increased throughout the country.¹⁹ "Dozens" were riding each Sunday in Wellington by 1897, and "[l]arge numbers of women" were seen cycling in Auckland by 1898, for example.²⁰ It appears that the hilly topography of Dunedin did nothing to deter women cycling, for women were more numerous there than their counterparts in those other hilly centres, Auckland and Wellington.

Christchurch numbers, however, continued to outstrip all other centres, and visitors to the city were consistently reported to be 'astonished' at the numbers of cyclists, including the

15. These eight women went on to form the Atalanta Ladies' Cycling Club. They were Alice Burn, Kate Wilkinson, Mrs Harry Thompson, Mrs Stace, Miss Boyd, Blanche Lough and her twin sister Bertha, and Miss Thompson. *NZW*, 24 October 1896, 10.

16. *NZW*, 3 December 1892, 9.

17. Ernest D. Hoben, "The Reign of the Wheel in Australasia: V. The Wheel in Maoriland," *The Review of Reviews*, Australian Edition, 8, no. 10 (1896): 376-81. The same report was found in several other places, e.g.; *Press* 20 April 1896, 4, *The New Zealand Graphic and Ladies' Journal*, 11 July 1896, 46, *NZW*, 5 December 1896, 7-8. It is unclear which is the original source for this information. The date of the volume in which Hoben's article appeared was October 20 1896, suggesting that his information was originally from the *Press*.

18. *NZW*, 13 February 1897, 20; *NZW*, 18 May 1897, 9-10.

19. The Australasian manager for the Massey-Harris Company, who had travelled extensively, commented on the high percentage of cyclists in Christchurch compared to other places, and implied that it was comparable to Chicago, where it was estimated that ten *per cent* of the population cycled. *NZC*, 19 March 1898, 6-7.

20. In Wellington, there were estimated to be 150 women cycling regularly by 1896 (*NZW*, 12 September 1896, 5); In Auckland, school girls were judged to be the most proficient of riders (*NZC*, 8 January 1898, 9).

large proportion of women. Citizens reported during 1897 that every woman they met either could ride or was about to learn, and that by 1898, it was rare to meet a woman who didn't ride.²¹ In the smaller townships, a similar pattern emerged, except in Oamaru where women's cycling was established earlier, perhaps because of the presence there of dress reformer and feminist Alice Burn.²²

According to the English cycling magazines, by 1898 the 'craze' was all over, at least with the "ultra-fashionable folks who are supposed to lead the way in these matters." But as 'Porowhita', cycling columnist for the *White Ribbon*, observed, the wide appeal and utility of the bicycle was enough to ensure continued high demand.²³

Family members and friends were instrumental in introducing women to the bicycle in the early 1890s, when the activity was novel and machines were not yet readily available. The common practice of reporting names of cyclists in the cycling magazines shows that women usually cycled with their families, and the recurring combinations of surnames suggests that they also cycled regularly with their friends.

For those whose family or friends displayed no interest in cycling, clubs played a significant part in providing a safe and structured social context for the activity. Where no ladies' clubs existed, or for those not interested in joining a ladies' cycling club, women frequently attached themselves to male clubs and were sometimes able to join these, though usually only as associated members, *i.e.*, without voting privileges.

The demand for tuition in basic riding skills by novice riders prompted the establishment of cycling schools in many urban centres. Without the benefit of previous experience, cycling schools played a significant role in introducing adult women to cycling in a dignified manner and in privacy. As well as imparting information about road safety, cycling academies emphasised the finer points of riding etiquette to female riders. Riding schools often employed

21. NZW, 13 February 1897, 5; 10 May 1899, 5. NZC, 12 June 1897, 5; 19 March 1898, 6-7; 10 December 1898, 8.

22. Alice Burn (*née* Meredith) was an accomplished athlete and brilliant student. She married her schoolmaster, David W. Burn, at the age of sixteen. She attended Canterbury College of the University of New Zealand Christchurch, studying medicine. She completed her medical degree at the University of Edinburgh, where she was based at the Women's Medical College, and finished it in the minimum amount of time, "having secured no fewer than 17 honours certificates, most of them of the first-class order of merit." (*Otago Witness*, 8 May 1907, 52). She was awarded her M.B. and Ch.B. in 1906, and went on to work for a diploma in public health. Her interest lay in preventing infant mortality, inspecting school children's health, and in domestic hygiene. Whilst in Edinburgh, Alice was active in promoting the establishment of a central bureau for the investigation of underpaid or reduced-salaried posts for medical women. In New Zealand, Alice Burn pursued a keen interest in cycling and wrote extensively on dress reform, herself wearing bifurcated rational dress costumes. Corallyn Newman, ed., *Canterbury Women Since 1893* (Christchurch: Regional Women's Decade Committee, 1979), 22.

23. *The White Ribbon*, September 1898, 9.

female instructors, since most female cyclists felt that only women could properly instruct other women: there were "a hundred and one little things that a man knows nothing about that all go to make up a graceful whole in the cyclists' riding"24 Such schools of instruction were established in most of the larger urban centres of New Zealand.²⁵ Cycling schools were often attached to manufacturers' or retailers' businesses and the cost of lessons was refunded (fully or partially) if the learner bought a bicycle from the attached business. Cook, Howlison and Company, for example, opened a cycling school in the North Dunedin Drill Shed:

Arrangements have been made for the instruction of riders of both sexes, and the firm are to be congratulated upon their enterprise in supplying a much-desired want.²⁶

This school was one of many similar schools already operating in Christchurch and Wellington.²⁷

Some enterprising women established themselves in business to teach riding skills. Edith Statham and her friend Emily Rigg, for example, established a successful venture in Dunedin in 1896 and extended their business skills to set up a shopping service and cycling agency for people living in Otago and Southland.²⁸ Such an opportunity to earn a living might have

24. *WR*, October 1897, 7.

25. Cycling schools were advertised in both of the cycling magazines as well as in the *Wise's* and *Stone's* directories.

26. *OW*, 13 August 1896, 37.

27. In Christchurch, for example, Mrs F. Painter and her husband ran a cycling school in the Christchurch Drill Shed, under the auspices of Adams, Curties and Co., cycle manufacturers. Mrs Painter gave private instruction to women in the afternoons, when afternoon tea was provided. A small charge was made for instruction, but this was refunded if a machine was purchased from Adams, Curties and Co. (*NZW*, 15 June 1895, 10). The Painter's Cycling Academy was still offering its services eighteen months later, and was a well-established enterprise, with fixed hours of operation and set fees:

Open 8 a.m. till 6 p.m. Daily Sessions from 2 to 5 p.m. Tickets 1s 6d each, or twelve for 12s 6d. Private Tuition. Ladies or Gentlemen requiring Private Lessons, with Special Attention to Department, can arrange hours to suit convenience. Terms 2s 6d, or 21s per course. (*NZW*, 30 January 1897, 3).

Note the extra cost for instructions in department, which would have attracted women wealthy enough to afford learning how to make a favourable impression in public. In Wellington, there were two such cycling schools as early as 1896. (*NZW*, 12 September 1896, 5).

28. The first report of their venture read:

"Misses-E. M. Statham and E. T. Rigg have opened in Dunedin an agency for the sale, purchase, and hire of ladies' bicycles. These ladies are experienced cyclists, and their knowledge of what to ride, what is requisite to become an efficient rider, of all the difficulties to be overcome, and of what is suitable to wear when cycling, fit them to become the advisers of ladies about to cycle. Arrangements have been made for the instruction of ladies in cycling. Misses Statham and Rigg personally superintending the lessons and attending to the finishing of pupils. There is little difficulty in learning to ride a bicycle, but having learnt to ride some ladies simply sit on their machines and pedal along ignorant of their peculiar appearance caused by having handles too high, seat too low, or vice versa, and doing extra work when an adjustment or a few words of advice from an experienced friend would bring about an alteration of position and appearance, and with it a greater amount of comfort. Such advice and more Misses Statham and Rigg are capable of giving, and to those about to cycle I would say, Seek the advice of these ladies before

supplemented what Edith Statham earned from her secretarial skills and helped finance her own cycling interests.

An Alternative Means of Transport

Whatever reasons women had for riding the bicycle, they appreciated its utility regardless of the setbacks experienced. The advantages of the bicycle as a form of transport were apparent from the outset. Once the design of a safety bicycle fitted with pneumatic tyres was established, there was little doubt that this method of locomotion was a serious rival to its nearest equivalent, the horse.

The first and most obvious advantage women recognised was that bicycles were cheaper to purchase, maintain, and to store than a horse. Between 1890 and 1900, the average price for a saddled and harnessed horse of average quality was about £14 10s, but the added expense of tack, feed, grooming, and stabling, not to mention veterinarian expenses, represented a significant annual outlay for the convenience of a rider owning a horse. A new ladies' model bicycle, on the other hand, cost an average of around £22, but required very little additional expenditure by way of maintenance and repairs, no special storage facility, and no staff to look after it. Women also had the option of doing their own repairs, or simply taking the machine to a repair shop when necessary, whereas horse owners usually had to call on the services of horse doctors and farriers to keep their animals in prime condition.²⁹

^{Second,}
~~Third,~~ women discovered that the skills required to master the bicycle were more quickly and conveniently acquired than learning to ride a horse. Horses, if accustomed to being regularly ridden by just one or two mounts, become familiar with each riders' riding style; hired horses are, therefore, more challenging to ride well, since they are ridden by large numbers of

learning, and having heard it act upon it, for their experience in various ways will be of benefit and advantage to those who wish to become expert riders, able to gracefully sit their machines, adjusted to a proper position, and to extract from the most popular sport of our time a fair share of the pleasures that fall to the lot of our sex when cycling." (*OW*, 6 August 1896, 37).

Around the middle of 1897, Edith and Emily, a surgical nurse, advertised their Shopping and Cycling Agency, undertaking for a less-than five *per cent* commission, to shop on behalf of rural dwellers, purchasing drapery, medicines, groceries, music, "no order too trifling or too large." They also offered to find lodgings for country visitors (*OW*, 19 August 1897, 43). They ran their cycling school for several years (*Stone's Directory*, 1899, 43).

29. "Average Prices - Horses, Saddle and Harness," *New Zealand Statistics*, 1890, 1891; *The Official New Zealand Year-book*, editions 1892 to 1900. I estimated figures by averaging each of the lowest prices and highest prices for the period, over the whole colony. There was significant variation throughout the country and within each province. Assuming the kind of people who purchased new bicycles each year in order to maintain a show of social status, would also be likely purchase the most expensive horses (assuming that high prices are indicative of quality), then the bicycle was certainly much cheaper than a horse, the average highest price for a horse for the period being over £23.

people. The skills of riding are acquired through a lengthy process in which both horse and rider learn each other's body language. The signals between a horse and a woman riding side-saddle complicate the process. The inert nature of the bicycle was an entirely new phenomenon for women; they found they could master the bicycle adequately and safely after only two or three day's tuition and practice.

Finally, unlike horses which require some preparation before riding, the bicycle was immediately available to ride, making it a favoured method of transport for spontaneous and versatile travel. Cycle riders merely had to wheel their machines to the curb and ride away. Equestrians, on the other hand, had to go through the process of notifying grooms of their intention to ride, and wait for the saddled and freshly groomed horse to be brought from the stable. This process could easily take more than an hour. In the course of an outing, a bicycle could be left unattended leaning against any wall or post; horses had to be carefully tethered, usually near drinking troughs. On returning from a cycle ride, the bicycle could be quickly wiped clean and put away, whereas horses had to be unsaddled, groomed, fed, and stabled. If horses were not stabled on the premises, and if staff did not live-in, the process at either end of the journey took longer. The immediacy of access to the bicycle enabled women to pursue their cycling interests unhindered by any other arrangements.

One of the most significant consequences of using the bicycle was that it enabled people who were formerly remote, in geographical, social as well as sexual terms, to interact much more easily.³⁰ The idea of courting, in the context of cycling, was often a topic of speculation. A news item from the English cycling periodical, *The Wheelwoman*, for example, was reproduced in the *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies' Journal*, informing readers that at a bicycle picnic near Melbourne, no fewer than fifteen engagements were announced in the days following, and commented: "Surely no one could possibly desire a better recommendation for cycling than this?"³¹ The potential for romance to develop *via* cycling was noted by one British visitor who,

30. The bicycle was not, however, so suited to routine long-distance travel.

31. *NZGLJ*, 17 September 1898, 372. In an a previous edition, the same magazine quoted Sir Walter Besant's observations of courting, which had been published in *Queen*:

I watch the pair as they carry on the game. For a time the bicycles run along smoothly, side by side, at an even, steady pace.

This reminds one of the time when we sat in the shade side by side, saying nothing, because there was nothing to say, except that in each other's company we did not want to chatter, and were quite happy in silence. Then the maiden shoots ahead, but, turning, discharges a Parthian smile. At this point I have seen a bashful lover fall off his vehicle, prone in the dust, pierced through and through - a sad object lesson of Love, the Conqueror. Mostly, however, he rallies, and starts in pursuit, but not so fast as to catch the girl at once. No, the game must be prolonged. Presently he catches her up and they both laugh, well pleased.

Then the bicycles run on again, but more merrily; sometimes they separate, then they come together again, which reminds one poetically of butterflies on the wing, now touching, now

when touring New Zealand, was spontaneously invited on a moonlight ride as he was walking one evening past the house of an acquaintance. Accepting the offer, he eventually found himself cycling alone with the young lady who had extended the invitation:

. . . Miss Frazer and I were alone; but fearing to frighten her, I said nothing. I didn't know in those days how independent the New Zealanders are. Presently we dismounted, . . . we took a narrow path through a small clump of bush . . . we came out on the edge of a cliff, and there, right before us, lay Auckland Harbour, bathed in the most glorious moonlight.³²

Elkington made many other similar observations about the independence of young New Zealand women during his travels in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Colonial reminiscences noted how pioneers had to marry within their small restricted social circle because geographical difficulties prevented them from going further afield in search of potential marriage partners.³³ Access to transport and roading systems significantly increased the likelihood of their meeting people outside the usual small social circles. Cycling club activities afforded ample opportunities for strangers to meet and form bonds, unhindered by formally arranged chaperons. Some reports hinted at blossoming romances, remarking on couples who had wandered away from the main group. A mutual interest in cycling sometimes did, in fact, lead to courtship and marriage.³⁴

Another consequence of the popularity of cycling was that it became widely established as another form of transport, no longer just a fad.³⁵ The *New Zealand Wheelman* cited examples of a variety of people seen cycling: parsons, lamplighters, well-known horse riders, doctors, sweeps, dressmakers, teachers, and nurses; photographs show policemen also used

flying apart. Then we come to a hill. The girl goes slowly. Now is the time for her lover to show his courage and his strength. Up goes the bicycle - heavens! 'tis Samson himself, surely, who directs it. Arrived at the top there is the descent. The girl goes down gingerly; not so the lover. Once more for a show of courage; he descends like an avalanche, to wait for the girl at the bottom. . . . It is a pretty method of courtship

NZGLJ, 6 August 1898, 172.

32. E. Way Elkington, *Adrift in New Zealand* (London: John Murray, 1906), 53-4.

33. A. E. Woodhouse, ed., *Tales of Pioneer Women* (Hamilton: Silver Fern Books, 1988); Peter Perry's study of mobility in rural Dorset also highlights the changes to working class social and physical isolation that the bicycle brought about by facilitating inter-village courtships. Perry recognises the contribution that more general social improvements made to the widening of rural people's horizons, such as increases in leisure (higher wages, shorter working days/weeks) and literacy (reading advertisements for bicycles and local cycling events). It is not clear whether bicycles performed the same courtship function in New Zealand, but it is likely to have occurred, especially in rural areas where residents did not have easy access to railways. Peter Perry, "Working Class Isolation and Mobility in Rural Dorset, 1827-1936: A Study of Marriage Distances," *Transactions* no. 46 (March, 1969): 134.

34. *NZW*, 28 November, 1894, 9. It was not always clear, however, whether the couples met through cycling, but there was a high likelihood that strangers introduced to each other at club outings formed attachments in this context.

35. *NZC*, 28 August 1897, 25; *The New Zealand Cyclist Touring Club Gazette*, 1 February 1899, 94; *OW*, 29 June 1899, 52, 19 January 1899, 42; 29 June 1899, 52.

bicycles in their work, as did other professionals and prominent citizens, whose activities were regularly reported in the society pages and cycling columns of newspapers.³⁶ Many people confessed to the bicycle having become a necessity. The mayor of Christchurch, Mr. C. Louisson, for example, publicly stated that "he could not do without one."³⁷ Businessmen in Dunedin found the bicycle useful, literally ". . . to keep pace with the times, when competition is so keen, when not one point in business can be lost, they must have the bicycle as part of the firm."³⁸ Children's cycling was also popular by the late 1890s, and children's bicycles were regularly advertised in the trade catalogues. Many high school girls were soon 'expert' riders, using their bicycles to go to and from school.³⁹

Acknowledged as a rapid form of transport, the bicycle superseded the brougham for many, and was used by women going to dances and balls, as well as for shopping.⁴⁰ 'Theta'⁴¹ chided Christchurch women for carelessly leaving their bicycles lying about verandah posts and gutters when out shopping, and for leaving them unsecured for long periods, since bicycle theft had become quite common.⁴² By the end of the decade, people considered bicycles to be a routine form of transport for women in the urban environment. Its popularity was at the root of the demise of the debates surrounding women's cycling. Cycling had become a normalised social activity, no longer just a leisure pursuit for a minority.

As a feature of modernity, the bicycle effectively altered the concepts of time and distance in people's minds. About four times faster than walking, cycling was the fastest mode of self-propelled locomotion most people had experienced to date. The sensation of speed was a completely novel feeling. It was one of the highlights expressed when people extolled the pleasures of cycling. The idea of the landscape rushing by in a blur, and being almost a part of nature itself, was glorified.⁴³ 'Altiora', the ladies' columnist for the *New Zealand Cyclist* captured the feeling in this way:

There is a rare intoxication in that swift, silent motion of the wheel, so unlike every

36. *NZW*, 30 September 1893, 5; 29 June 1895, 11; 27 February 1897, 5. For example, the activities of the daughters of Lord Glasgow, fourteenth Governor of New Zealand, were often featured. *NZW*, October 19, 1895, 7.

37. *OW*, 9 December 1897, 37; *NZW*, 22 February 1899, 19.

38. *NZW*, 16 November 1895, 5.

39. Children: *NZGLJ*, 9 September 1899, 442; high school girls: *NZW*, 27 February 1897, 8; 18 May 1897, 7.

40. *OW*, 26 September 1895, 35; 25 March 1897, 44; 7 April 1898, 44. Dances and balls: *NZC*, 14 August 1897, 5.

41. The ladies' columnist for the *New Zealand Wheelman*. 'Theta' was the pen-name used by Kate Wilkinson, a well-known Canterbury dress reformer.

42. *NZW*, 10 May 1899, 5.

43. According to Chris Rojek, the blurring of the scenery created by travelling at speed, inspired the impressionist perspective of viewing the world. (Pers. comm., 1995).

other motion we know of. . . . You learn to see by flashes. You take in the landscape as you breathe - unconsciously almost, so quick does the habit of observation become when the system is kept healthy by wheel exercise. It makes you live, you are sensitive at every pore, vital in every nerve, and thus it happens that you imbibe sights, sounds, perfumes on every hand And if you learn to see in flashes, you learn to think in flashes also⁴⁴

Stephen Kern's eclectic treatise, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918*, presents some interesting perspectives on the theme of speed and the bicycle in the 1890s, noting that some contemporary popular writers observed how the bicycle "quicken[ed] the perceptive faculties of young people and made them more alert;" that it created a "culture of speed" and a desire to conquer time and space; that it generated the feeling of a "new rhythm of movement, a new sense of penetrating the surrounding world as [the] senses open to new parts of the terrain."⁴⁵ The speed produced by the bicycle made a profound impression on human sensibilities, so much so that people were warned against getting "bicycle face" from wind resistance. Contemporary literature was replete with expressions of the sensations experienced by cyclists.⁴⁶

As well as sensing that the pace of life seemed to be speeding up, the world also seemed to be shrinking in size. Greater distances could be covered more quickly than ever before by human-powered means, drawing the wider world within reach for all people who could afford to cycle. The perception of the world as 'smaller-than-previously-experienced', probably originated from when explorers brought the larger world back to the populous in the form of tales of great adventures and artifacts as evidence. The unknown world became more attainable for ordinary people. The advent of railway systems enabled masses of people to see for themselves what lay beyond their limited environs. David Harvey's term 'time-space compression', captures the idea of people recognising that their perception of their previously known world has been altered by the experience of traversing space more quickly than before.⁴⁷ Cycle tourists testified to the excitement of discovery on their journeys, and enthusiasts waxed eloquent about all the new things they had seen and done on their adventures.⁴⁸ Such tales

44. NZC, 3 April, 1897, 5.

45. Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), 111.

46. For example, both H. G. Wells, *The Wheels of Chance*, Wayfarer's Library (London: Dent, 1921), and Jerome K. Jerome, *Three Men on the Bummel* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1982; first published, 1900) convey the excitement and sense of adventure and novelty of cycling. See also James Starrs, *The Noiseless Tenor: The Bicycle in Literature* (New Jersey: Cornwall Books, 1982).

47. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Changes* (England: Blackwell, 1989), 240.

48. Many touring cyclists wrote books recounting their experiences, and these found a ready market. e.g., "Chilosa," *Waif and Stray: The Adventures of Two Tricycles* (Westminster: The Roxburghe Press, n.d.); Elizabeth Robins Pennell's many travel books; John Foster Fraser, *Round the World on a Wheel: Being the Narrative of a Bicycle Ride of Nineteen Thousand Two Hundred and Thirty-Seven Miles*

motivated others to try similar ventures and, for women whose spatial movements were circumscribed by an array of social conventions, these experiences must have been very appealing.

Pursuit of a New Form of Recreation

The bicycle offered women an entirely new form of leisure; it was unlike any other physical pursuit women could enjoy in the nineteenth century. It could be used for informal outings, for loosely-organised activities at social gatherings, and for more structured pursuits in the context of a recreational or sports club.

For most women, the most usual way to enjoy cycling was probably through informally arranged excursions with family or friends. By 1895, arrangements were able to be made more spontaneously and more quickly since many families in the four main cities had installed telephones in their private residences. The immediacy of this technology would have helped to foster the dramatic increase in cycling which occurred around the middle of the decade.⁴⁹

Cycling activities became a regular feature of the many carnivals and picnics which middle-class women attended. Businesses and churches, as well as cycling clubs, used the bicycle to supplement festivities. The cycle trade, for example, held an annual picnic with novelty races on cycles, such as egg and spoon, thread-the-needle, *etc.*, and the demonstrations of riding skills and special formation routines were enjoyed by large numbers of spectators. Bicycle gymkhanas were entirely dedicated to bicycle games, competitions, and demonstrations, and were in themselves popular social events.⁵⁰ Such gatherings, including the attendance of prominent members of society and what they wore, were reported in detail in the cycling magazines.

The idea of belonging to an all-female cycling club had appeal for some women, and there is evidence to suggest that many women who cycled, chose to do so in this context. All-female cycling clubs purported to meet needs unique to female riders. Christchurch proponents,

Through Seventeen Countries and Across Three Continents (London: Futura, 1989; first published 1899).

49. The first telephone exchanges were opened in 1881 in Christchurch, with twenty-seven subscribers and in Auckland, with twenty-six subscribers. Dunedin followed in 1882 and Wellington in 1883. By 1890, there were about 2,500 subscribers throughout New Zealand. Claude Enright, "Post Office," in *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, ed. A. H. McLintock, vol. 2 (Wellington: R. E. Owen, Government Printer, 1966), 846.

50. Instructional books and articles were published to assist people in how to stage a bicycle gymkhana, e.g., the *New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, 1 January, 1899, 80-1, gives very detailed instructions, including how and when to send out the invitations, what kind of food to offer, the best kind of venue *etc.* See also Major Walter Wingfield, *Bicycle Gymkhanas and Musical Rides: With Diagrams and Drawings and Instructions How to Get Them Up* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1896).

for example, felt that a women's club would unite female cyclists, providing them with both recreational and social opportunities. It would provide them with an opportunity to discuss things which were of no interest to their male counterparts. One of the topics women wished to discuss with each other was the matter of cycling dress - rational (*i.e.*, sensible) dress *vs.* cycling skirts, divided skirts, as well as veils, hatpins, and such bicycle features as drop frames, ladies' saddles, *etc.* It would have been difficult for women to discuss this in mixed company without appearing rude by excluding men from such specialised conversation.⁵¹

A second reason why an all-female club might have attracted members is that such single-sex groups were entirely consistent with contemporary social practice, where women sought the company of their own sex.⁵² Since opportunities for female cyclists to socialise amongst themselves were claimed to be too few, a ladies' cycling club was seen as an ideal way to increase social intercourse.⁵³ In this way, clubs were a logical extension of female social culture.

Third, all-female clubs offered a practical solution to the problem of finding cycling companions. In the early 1890s very few women were interested in cycling, and most of their male counterparts were likely to be occupied in some kind of employment during the daytime.⁵⁴ Clubs provided opportunities for women to find cycling companions and to extend cycling networks, by providing a place where a woman could meet others "with similar tastes to her own, where short rides can be arranged with congenial companions."⁵⁵

Fourth, there was the consideration of 'safety in numbers', since harassment in the street was not uncommon. Women who cycled did so at considerable personal cost, risking their physical safety and their emotional well-being. They were often assaulted or insulted by onlookers when out riding. Women reported being pelted by sticks, stones and food, boys thrusting sticks or caps into the spokes, or pulling at their skirts to make them fall off.⁵⁶ The situation seemed particularly bad in Dunedin, where the issue was raised with the mayor and gained publicity in the Dunedin newspapers.⁵⁷ The most likely target for street harassment was

51. *Press*, 17 August, 1892, 3.

52. See, for example, Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1981).

53. *NZW*, 9 July 1896, 5; 24 October 1896, 5.

54. The passage of the *Shop and Shop Assistants' Act* in 1895, however, allowed for a weekly half-holiday; most local councils chose Wednesday or Thursday, Saturday hardly ever being considered. W. P. Reeves, *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 2 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1902), 181-90; *NZW*, 5 November, 1892, 6.

55. *NZW*, 9 July 1896, 5.

56. *NZW*, 10 August, 1895, 5-6; 19 October, 1895, 4; David Rubinstein, "Cycling in the 1890s," *Victorian Studies* 21 (1977): 63.

57. *OW*, 26 March 1896, 35.

the woman riding in rational dress. Mrs. Cadwallader, a prominent Christchurch dress reformer, was commended for her fortitude and courage in the face of harassment:

Mrs. Cadwallader . . . persistently and at all times wears her knickers, defies the jeers of ribald men, and is not one of those who try to secure the comforts of the 'bockers while hiding them under a flowing skirt.⁵⁸

As well as the protection afforded by cycling companions, there was an increased likelihood that in a group of women cycling together, someone might possess mechanical expertise. For a woman to cycle alone and not be able to perform basic repairs there was always the potential danger of being stranded beyond the city limits.⁵⁹

Finally, for a significant number of women who joined them, clubs represented a statement of female independence and solidarity. Many women viewed cycling as a symbol of women's socio-political emancipation. Some were also proponents of dress reform, and used every cycling trip as an opportunity to advertise the utility of rational dress. This posed a problem for women who wore rational dress for convenience rather than for political reasons, since they were assumed by onlookers to support female suffrage. It also caused friction within some clubs, notably the Atalanta Cycling Club, of Christchurch, which came to be seen as politically aligned with women's emancipation.

Political allusions aside, 'Altiora' suggested that clubs helped to break down the prejudice against women cycling, "in keeping before the unaccustomed eyes of the scoffer the vision of the lady on wheels." Furthermore, she argued, the challenge of rising above prejudice accelerated the popularity of cycling amongst some women, who saw it as their "noble duty towards the rest of woman-kind in spreading the gospel of the cycle throughout the land."⁶⁰

Aside from the personal satisfaction club membership offered, the formation of cycling clubs was consistent with the increasing practice of institutionalising and regulating recreation and sporting activities throughout the nineteenth century. As sport became more formalised, it became subject to bureaucratic forms and practices which were part of prevailing beliefs about what constituted a rational society and which were features of nineteenth-century modernity. In addition to formalising rules of games, infrastructures developed to support the existence of

58. *NZW*, 7 September, 1895, 5. Harassers were not necessarily the "usual breed of larrikins" (*i.e.*, working class males), but were also found amongst the children of "well-connected" citizens. On one occasion, Mrs Cadwallader was harassed by some young women. "We are in possession of the names of the hoodlums, but having ascertained that the parents are well-known and respected citizens we suppress our strong inclination to public the names of these youthful lady insulters. It is satisfactory to learn that they have been prevailed upon to call at Mrs Cadwallader's residence and apologise for their senseless conduct." *NZW*, 25 February, 1896, 5.

59. *NZC*, 12 June 1897, 5.

60. *NZC*, 12 June 1897, 5.

sport: clubs, media coverage, competitions at local, provincial, national and international levels, curriculum development in schools, mass spectator facilities, gambling, and sponsorship.⁶¹ Recreational and sporting clubs adopted formal committee structures and procedures, reflecting the bureaucratic practices of state and commercial institutions. Committee members and officers (such as chair, secretary, and treasurer) were nominated and elected by the membership, for example. In a similar fashion, cycling clubs established rules and administrative procedures based on the written word (constitutions, minutes, correspondence, accounts). A hierarchical structure of authority (*e.g.*, captain and vice-captain; president and vice-president) was set in place and committee members were delegated tasks (official duties).⁶²

The rules devised for each women's cycling club varied, but were generally amended versions of rules for male clubs.⁶³ Rules about racing were probably omitted on the grounds that they were irrelevant to women. Their omission, however, left the issue of racing open to interpretation, as Alice Burn proved when she decided to race (see discussion below).

Dress codes signalled club identity to the outside world and, at its outset, each club detailed the particulars of its uniform. Whilst such rules can be appreciated in the context of the modernising society, the details of the rules offer additional insight into how dress codes expressed the gender order. Uniforms for women were discussed more than those for men, for whom the uniform unvaryingly was knickerbockers, an Eton jacket, and a cap.⁶⁴ Women generally wore a cycling skirt, a blouse, an Eton jacket, and a hat. It went without question that the whole costume was to be neat and tidy, and should render the woman as inconspicuous as possible. Skirts and sleeves were narrow, the hat small, ornamentation such as furs, feathers, lacy trims, brooches, and pins were to be minimal, and colours were to be 'quiet'.⁶⁵ The issue of dress was of great significance because it expressed in a public way a woman's respectability and social standing. Jane Malthus and Helene Roberts both argue that the clothes worn by women and men performed the function of what Goffman termed an 'identity kit'.⁶⁶ Roberts

61. Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 6, 35.

62. Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Bryan S. Turner, *Dictionary of Sociology* (England: Penguin, 1984), 28-9.

63. The rules for the New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club, although manifesting bureaucratic principles, shed no light on the types of rules all-female clubs might have adopted. I did not find any other club rules in the New Zealand archives.

64. There was no need to direct men to choice of colour, since this was considered irrelevant to men's sartorial needs. Only the racing clubs issued directives about colours, and these were purely for distinguishing club affiliations during a race event.

65. Dark blues, browns, greys, fawns or creams were considered suitable colours for women.

66. Erving Goffman, *Asylums* (New York: Doubleday, 1961), 20, cited in Helene E. Roberts, "The Exquisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman," *Signs* 2, no. 3 (1977): 555.

in particular details these differences, arguing that the clothes worn by women and men throughout the nineteenth century clearly expressed gender differences as well as gendered identities.⁶⁷ Roberts's paradigm is consistent with Jill Julius Matthews's model of the gender order and the idea of an inventory of feminine attributes which I discussed in Chapter 1. Matthews's model clearly identifies the criterion of appearance as a significant feminine attribute.⁶⁸ (I discuss in more depth the ideas of gendered appearances through clothing in Chapter 4).

The wearing of rational dress was a contentious issue. Unless a club specifically outlawed the wearing of rational dress on a club outing, it ran the risk of some of its members adopting such dress, thereby creating the impression of a politically radical club. As women's clubs grew in number, prohibition of rational dress in association with club activities became common practice in order to attract more members, especially those women who did not want to be associated with either the dress reform or women's suffrage movements.⁶⁹ Not surprisingly, the two earliest clubs, the Atalanta and the Mimiro, set the precedent for others to follow.

The Atalanta Cycling Club was established in Christchurch in 1892, and was reputed to be the first all-women's cycling club in the world.⁶⁹ The founders felt that a women's club would unite female cyclists, providing them with both recreational and social opportunities.⁷⁰ The motion to form the Atalanta Cycling Club was put by Alice Burn, a strong advocate for dress reform and who became its first secretary.⁷¹ The rules of the Bicycle Touring Club were adopted in an amended form, but the matter of club uniform was postponed until a later meeting, when it was decided to allow women to wear what they wished, provided the club emblem and colour (cream) were worn.⁷² A year later, however, because the club had suffered bad publicity from the rumour that *all* the members were in favour of rational dress, it was unanimously agreed that none of the members be allowed to appear in that costume.⁷³

Along with the other cycling clubs in the city, the Atalanta members joined the opening

67. Jane Malthus, "'Bifurcated and Not Ashamed': Late Nineteenth-Century Dress Reformers in New Zealand," *The New Zealand Journal of History* 23, no. 1 (1989): 34; Roberts, 1977, 555.

68. Jill Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), 15.

69. Atalanta was the name for a model of bicycle, and was probably adopted in reference to Atalanta, a Greek mythological figure.

70. *Press*, 17 August, 1892, 3. Previously, if women were allowed to belong at all, it was to "ladies' branches" of male cycling clubs.

71. Malthus, 1989, 41.

72. *Press*, 19 August 1892, 4. It was ultimately decided not to make any hard and fast rule about cut or colour of the costume to be worn, provided that colour was conspicuous in the dress, and that the Club colours were worn. *Press*, 1 September 1892, 4.

73. *Press*, 7 September 1893, 5. The motion was rescinded a couple of years later when the dress reform debate was less controversial.

run for its first season, parading through the city watched by thousands of spectators. During each season the Atalanta Club organised one- or two-day trips, and extended its collegiality to the local social scene, hosting balls, card evenings, picnics, and 'At Homes' at its club rooms in the city centre.

It is impossible to say how many women belonged to the Atalanta Club since no club records have been recovered. Press reports, however, suggest that it was a successful club which flourished from its inception.⁷⁴ Numbers continued to increase to the end of the 1890s but, despite its popularity, the Atalanta Club ceased to exist somewhere between November 1897 and October 1898.⁷⁵ There is no explicit account of its demise, but it is highly probable that by 1898 cycling for women was no longer problematic: women no longer had difficulty finding friends to cycle with; were routinely accepted for membership of men's cycling clubs; and were seldom harassed. The concerns which had led to the formation of all-female clubs seemed to have been resolved. Although another ladies' cycling club was mooted in August 1899, complete with club rooms, 150 members and a public tea room, there is no evidence it was ever established.⁷⁶

The Mimiroladies' Cycling Club, established in Dunedin in 1895, was the second all-women's cycling club to be formed in New Zealand.⁷⁷ Just one month after its formation, the membership stood at eighteen and, like its Christchurch counterpart, the committee of the Mimiroladies consisted of prominent local women. The membership of the Mimiroladies Cycling Club grew steadily.⁷⁸ Activities consisted of monthly meetings in the club rooms, regular runs around Dunedin and further afield, socials, dances, and picnics. Members of the other male clubs were frequently invited to the social gatherings. Despite its popularity, testimony to which was given in its fourth Annual General Meeting in 1899, this club also failed to survive into the twentieth century.⁷⁹

Before long, all-female cycling clubs were also established in Wellington, Auckland and Greymouth. After two years of press speculation, the Wellington Ladies' Cycling Club was finally formed in 1895. A small committee was formed to draw up some rules to present at an

74. *NZW*, 11 February 1893, 10; *Canterbury Times*, 7 January 1897, 24.

75. *NZW*, 1 June 1897, 7; 19 October 1898, 7.

76. *NZW*, 16 August 1899, 5.

77. It was initiated by former Atalanta member, Edith Statham.

78. There were over twenty members by March 1896, forty-seven by October 1897. No other precise numbers were reported in this source. *OW*, 26 March 1896, 35; 7 October 1897, 37.

79. *OW*, 16 November 1899, 41. Again, no explanation could be found in any of the primary sources, but it is likely that the need for a women's club in Dunedin had become redundant.

initial meeting.⁸⁰ Although the *New Zealand Wheelman* speculated as to whether Wellington women would emulate the courage of the Christchurch women in suggesting dress reform, I found no details about their dress code in the primary sources.⁸¹ By 1896, 400 cyclists were active in Wellington; it is unclear how many of these were women, but the *New Zealand Wheelman* later reported numerous women cycling by May 1897.⁸² In addition to the formal procedures usual in establishing a club, a scheme was submitted for obtaining bicycles on satisfactory terms, thus facilitating the entry into cycling of women financially less well-off. The Wellington Ladies' Cycling Club was probably not the only club to offer such a service, but it was the only explicit statement of such a scheme mentioned in connection with an all-female club.⁸³ A few of the women in this club were also dress reformers.⁸⁴

The Auckland Ladies' Cycling Club was formed in 1897. At the opening run of the 1897 cycling season, approximately fifty members joined the procession in downtown Auckland.⁸⁵ Auckland women were reported to be enthusiastic cyclists, "despite the hilly roads."⁸⁶

The Mawhera Cycling Club of Greymouth added an unusual twist to its organisation by allowing males to join as both members and committee members, although it was supposed to be a ladies' club. About twenty women and 'several' men met in September 1897 to form the club, and one of its objects was to arrange regular club runs, "so as to make cycling pleasant and sociable."⁸⁷ A committee of five was appointed, consisting of both women and men. It is likely that men were admitted to the club because the small population of Greymouth could not support two single-sex social cycling clubs.

Most small-town clubs admitted women, at least for the purposes of participating in club runs and social activities.⁸⁸ Even in these small places, like men, women were not guaranteed

80. It is unfortunate that the names of the officers and committee are mentioned neither in *NZW* nor the Wellington paper, the *New Zealand Mail*.

81. *NZW*, 22 May 1894, 6. It may be that by the time this club was formed, the issue of rational dress in cycling clubs was not of such intense concern.

82. *NZW*, 18 May 1897, 9; *NZGLJ*, 27 June 1896, 546.

83. It was fairly common practice amongst men's clubs to acquire a fleet of bicycles to hire to members, or to facilitate purchases.

84. *NZW*, 11 July 1895, 7. A photograph of them in bloomers on display at Kinsey's studio attracted a great deal of attention. Kinsey was a well-known photographer and cyclist, and his daughter also cycled. There are many posed photographs of them together on a sociable bicycle.

85. *NZGLJ*, 9 October 1897, 493.

86. *NZW*, 18 May 1897, 7.

87. *NZC*, 25 September 1897, 7.

88. Examples of such clubs included the Napier Wanderers' Bicycle Club (20 female members in 1897); the Gore Cycling Club; Vincent Cycling Club, Cromwell (12 female members in 1897); and the Alexandra Cycling Club. *New Zealand Metropolitan Cycle Show, Catalogue*, 1897, 92-6.

automatic entry, even as associate members.⁸⁹ They had to be nominated by an existing member, and voted in by the committee. The Nelson Amateur Athletic and Cycling Club, although lobbied to admit females, decided not to after lengthy debate, although the minutes of this meeting record no reason for this decision.⁹⁰ By the late 1890s, the *New Zealand Wheelman* and the *New Zealand Cyclist* reported regularly that numerous men's clubs had changed their rules to admit 'lady members', at least as associates.⁹¹

Women who were associates of, or who belonged to cycling clubs attended organised runs regularly during the October to May cycling season. Each year, an opening run of the season took place in a central part of the city or town, where members of all the cycling clubs assembled and paraded along a street route watched by the public. In larger cities, the spectators numbered thousands. Usually the ladies' clubs led the procession, and so were highly visible to the onlookers. The sight of a sizeable body of women on bicycles may have encouraged new female members to join clubs. Throughout the season, clubs organised regular weekday, weeknight and weekend trips of varying lengths and to a variety of local destinations. A forty to fifty mile ride on a weekend, and in a mixed-sex party, was quite usual for women by the late 1890s.⁹² In addition to their regular all-female expeditions, ladies' cycling clubs frequently invited members of male clubs to join their excursions. Cycling clubs arranged other social activities as well. Throughout the year, men's and women's clubs extended invitations to one another to attend card evenings, concerts, and balls, all of which were usually held outside the cycling season. During the cycling season, however, moonlight rides, picnics, and walking expeditions were especially favoured.

Cycle Racing: A New Sporting Opportunity

Whilst men's cycle racing in New Zealand was well established by the 1890s, women's racing was much slower to develop and was characterised more by novelty races held at picnics and carnivals than by serious competition. Racing for women overseas was characterised by infrequent opportunities for competition, irregularly staged events and few competitors. As an activity for women, racing was considered unfeminine and inappropriate by the middle-classes

89. Associate members had no voting rights.

90. Nelson Amateur Athletic and Cycling Club, Minute Book 1895-1900. 98pp.

91. By the late 1890s, many clubs in most towns where there were no separate ladies' clubs, had begun to nominate women for honorary membership, e.g., Hororata (*NZW*, 26 October 1898, 11; *OW*, 15 September 1898, [41], 22 September 1898, 41); Balclutha Cycling Club (*OW*, 15 September 1898, [41]); Maniototo Cycling Club (*OW*, 22 September 1898, 41).

92. *NZC*, 15 May 1897, 6.

unless events were novelty races.⁹³ It is difficult to say to what extent women's racing was taken seriously by competitors, coaches, and spectators. Women's racing, was more established in England, the United States of America, and France, where there were larger populations of women cyclists to draw from.⁹⁴ Women were able to compete in six-day races, centuries, and twenty-four-hour races, whereas in New Zealand, their racing was usually restricted to track events.⁹⁵ And although women's racing overseas drew great crowds, opinion was divided as to whether spectators went to enjoy the competitive aspects of the racing, or to enjoy the sight of scantily-clad women on bicycles.

New Zealand women who wished to race had infrequent opportunities to compete, and drew the same kind of mixed reactions for their efforts that their counterparts overseas did. Interest in formal competition developed early in New Zealand's cycling history at the same time as the rational recreation movement and the formalisation of sport was developing in Britain. Cycling associations were eventually established in New Zealand for amateur and professional racers, but these were exclusively male preserves.⁹⁶

Although few primary sources addressing women's cycle racing in New Zealand have surfaced, we do know that some women enjoyed competitive bicycle racing. Alice Burn, for example, was a keen sportswoman and decided she wanted to try cycle racing. In December 1892 she entered a men's road race in Oamaru but, unfortunately, an injury she sustained during training forced her to withdraw from the event.⁹⁷ Despite the fact that she did not actually race, her intent was enough to spark a debate about the propriety of women's racing. Many people wrote letters to the *New Zealand Wheelman* arguing the issue. One of the strongest opponents was 'One of the club', a member of the Atalanta Cycling Club, who claimed to write on behalf of some of the other members. She stated that the club ". . . does not in any way allow its members to take part in either road or track races, and that it was with no small amount of disgust that they read in the columns of the last issue of the *Wheelman* that their secretary had entered for a road race in Oamaru."⁹⁸ This comment was countered in a subsequent issue of

93. Novelty races of all kinds were held at almost every kind of carnival or festival, such as church fêtes, or agricultural and pastoral shows. Invariably there was competition between the sexes, which often included swapping roles (*e.g.*, men thread the needles, women hammering nails into wood *etc.*). These kinds of novelty races were performed on bicycles once cycling had become popular in the mid-1890s.

94. French female professional racers earned significantly more money, enjoyed greater luxuries, and travelled more extensively than their male counterparts, principally because they attracted larger spectator crowds. *Hub*, 12 September 1896, 221.

95. A 'century' means a distance of one hundred miles.

96. Men's racing started in New Zealand in the late 1870s.

97. *NZW*, 24 December 1892, 11.

98. *NZW*, 14 January 1893, 12.

the *New Zealand Wheelman* by 'Another of the club', who criticised 'One of the club' for assuming to represent the feeling within the Atalanta Cycling Club,⁹⁹ and asserted that the underlying issue was a political battle between the Conservatives and Liberals within the club;¹⁰⁰ Alice Burn's intention to race provided the Conservatives with the ammunition they needed to expound their values.¹⁰¹ Burn herself responded to 'One of the club' by pointing out that the rules of the Atalanta Cycling Club neither encouraged nor discouraged women's racing, and submitted a copy of the rules to the editor. She also testified to having received many congratulations, from within and outside the club, on the grounds that her actions helped "to assert a woman's right to do exactly as she pleases in spite of the strictures of a conventional majority."¹⁰² Another correspondent wrote in support of Alice Burn, and lamented the lost opportunity for Alice to advertise the use of knickerbockers. In denying 'Another one of the club' the publication of a reply, the editor commented: "Rather too hot. Can't you tone it down a trifle?"¹⁰³ Clearly the issue of women's cycle racing was contentious.

Despite the absence of racing opportunities for New Zealand women, some optimistically continued to train.¹⁰⁴ Their opportunity to race came in early 1896, when the first serious competition for women was held at Lancaster Park in Christchurch. Five events were held on two consecutive Saturdays at the Ladies' Cycling Carnival; in four of these rational dress was worn by the competitors. The *New Zealand Wheelman* reported the results of the races, with its own liberal interpretation of the events of the day: a 'grand open handicap' race, in which women and men competed together, was declared "one of the mistakes made by management . . . the six men who took part in the mixed race must have felt very uncomfortable as they had to meet the chaff and laughter of the jeering crowd . . ."¹⁰⁵ The reporter observed that if the men won they were hissed at, and if they were beaten by the women, they were laughed at.¹⁰⁶ Ensuing discussion in the *New Zealand Wheelman* indicated that in general, women's cycle racing was received unfavourably by everyone except the non-cycling spectators, who enjoyed

99. 'One of the club' was later censured at a club meeting for speaking out of turn.

100. NZW, 28 January 1893, 10. At this point in New Zealand's history, the women's suffrage movement was vigorously campaigning for voting rights for women, which they won in September 1893. This is why the accusation arose that the issue of women's cycle racing was really a political issue in disguise; Alice Burn was well known for her pro-suffrage sentiments.

101. According to 'Another of the Club', there was a balance of numbers between Conservatives and Liberals at the formation of the club, but as new members had joined, the 'radical' element had become a minority, albeit a strong one. NZW, 28 January 1893, 10.

102. NZW, 28 January 1893, 10.

103. NZW, 28 January 1893, 10.

104. NZW, 19 October 1895, 7.

105. NZW, 28 March 1896, 11.

106. NZW, 11 April 1896, 6.

the exhibition, and the racers themselves, who enjoyed the competition. After the events at Lancaster Park, female racers were called 'cyclodonnas', a derogatory nickname coined by the staff of *New Zealand Wheelman* office.¹⁰⁷ Ironically the conservative *Christchurch Press* reported the carnival in a straightforward and non-judgemental way, simply listing each race, the place getters and their times.¹⁰⁸

Subsequent to the event at Lancaster Park, women's races were held in conjunction with men's races, and were only ever reported in a perfunctory fashion. During 1897, fourteen-year-old Ettie Harvey excelled in the ladies' competitions, winning the first ladies' race held in Wanganui on 18 March, 1897. The *New Zealand Cyclist* made a feature of Ettie Harvey's racing career, mentioning three races in which she had competed between March and Easter of 1897, and included a large photograph of Ettie on her racing bicycle.¹⁰⁹ Several other races were reported throughout 1897 and 1898, in Blenheim, Nelson, Wanganui and Otaki - all small provincial towns. Without exception, the races were held over the half-mile.¹¹⁰ Sometimes there was official opposition from the League of New Zealand Wheelmen, the cycling body responsible for authorising racing which, for example, quashed the plans of the Hawera Cycling Club to hold a ladies' race, giving no reason for the rejection; permission was granted to stage the event only as a novelty race.¹¹¹ 'Theta' concluded in 1899 that the reason why women's cycle racing never 'caught on' in New Zealand was because clubs made no provision for their inclusion in their race programmes. Groups such as the Druids, however, regularly held ladies' half-mile races at their sports meetings, but such races were destined never to develop further because they did not come under the auspices of the national cycle racing body.¹¹² Although serious competitive cycling was considered by most people to be inappropriate for women, it is surprising to find that the outcry was not as strident nor as sustained as for other aspects of women's cycling, such as for their clothing and appearance.¹¹³

Ladies' cycling clubs were not supportive of women's racing. The issue arose early in the history of the Mimiro Cycling Club, for example, when, shortly after its inception, the club

107. *NZW*, 1 June 1897, 14.

108. *Press*, 23 March 1896, 3; 7 April 1896, 3.

109. *NZC*, 12 June 1897, 1.

110. *NZW*, 27 March 1897, 9; *NZC*, 3 April 1897, 7; 5 June 1897, 12; 6 November 1897, 14; 1 January, 1898, 15.

111. *NZC*, 16 October 1897, 19; 23 October 1897, 10.

112. *NZW*, 29 September 1899, 7.

113. During my research I did not find any archival material regarding public opinion of women's cycle racing. Newspapers and cycling periodicals of the time reported little about women's racing, but further searches into diverse archival sources could yield more. Neither did I find any information in the archives of Lancaster Park, where the Ladies' Cycling Carnival was held.

was asked if its members were interested in competing in the forthcoming Labour Day sports events. In the cycling column of the *Otago Witness*, the journalist reported that the ladies were unimpressed and somewhat taken aback by this gesture:

Cycling among ladies as a means to the pleasant enjoyment of a few hours in the country and as a recreation has always had my strong support and has been universally upheld, but racing among the fair sex has received little or no support at the hands of the ladies, and is strongly discouraged by all true lovers of the sport.¹¹⁴

The club must have received other invitations to race, because a later news report shows that it was prompted to make a stronger and more public stand:

The ladies would like it to be generally known that the club was not formed to encourage racing amongst ladies, and therefore they would be obliged to the different societies in Dunedin if they would refrain from inviting them to take part in such unwomanly proceedings. No doubt it is kindly meant, but the ladies do not like it. However, they are sure that this fact has only to be known and their feelings will be considered in the future. Cycling with many of them has been taken up not only as a pleasant recreation but as a means of restoring health, and they will be always pleased to welcome new members and give any assistance in their power to those who are only just entering the ranks of the cyclists. It is a great help and encouragement to a lady when just beginning to ride to find someone who is able and willing to give advice, and many of the Mimiro Club are well qualified to do this.¹¹⁵

The responses to women's cycle racing will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

Adventure Through Cycle Touring

Women's cycling was not just confined to urban sorties; many women enjoyed the opportunity for adventure that the bicycle offered. Weekend journeys into the nearby countryside were most popular, but touring the entire country was not unknown. By the turn of the century, long journeys paled in comparison to the round-the-world trips that some Victorian women made.¹¹⁶ It was not uncommon for women to undertake journeys alone, and they were not necessarily young women at the time.¹¹⁷ For these women, cycle touring represented the ultimate

114. *OW*, 8 August 1895, 35.

115. *OW*, 31 October 1895, 34.

116. For example, Miss Londonderry of England and Mrs. McIlraith of Chicago (*NZW*, 15 June 1895, 12). Elizabeth Robins Pennell toured extensively with her husband, and wrote many articles and books about her adventures in England, Italy, North Africa and the Hebrides, for example. Many countries were explored by women at this time. See, for example, Jane Robinson, *Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), Dorothy Middleton, *Victorian Lady Travellers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), and Mary Russell, *The Blessings of a Good Thick Skirt: Women Travellers and their World* (London: Collins, 1986).

117. For example, Isabel Homewood bicycled around the world at the age of sixty-six. At the age of seventy, she visited New Zealand where she had previously cycle toured, to visit friends, cycle, and climb mountains. She commented that she could still walk and climb mountains with the same ease and enjoyment as her younger friends. Isabel Homewood, *Recollections of an Octogenarian* (London: John Murray, 1932), 283.

freedom: independence, self-sufficiency, self-determination, absence of obligation, spontaneous adventure, and discovery.

As early as 1892, New Zealand women embarked on long tours. Alice Burn, for example, was interested in cycle touring and, when she and her husband cycled from Oamaru to Hokitika in January 1893, she was acclaimed to be the first woman to ride one hundred miles in a day.¹¹⁸ Similarly, Blanche Lough rode from Christchurch to Ashburton with her fiancé, taking just one day; this was one of many longer trips she made over the years.¹¹⁹ Mr. and Mrs. Preece were local Christchurch identities who cycled extensively around Canterbury for several years, first on their tandem tricycle, and later on their tandem bicycle. On each of their holidays they travelled the roads within fifty miles of Christchurch; they knew the roads intimately and counted the Hanmer Plains, Little River, Castle Hill, Oxford, and the Gebbie's Valley amongst their destinations, as well as places closer to the city.¹²⁰

Several women undertook more strenuous journeys, touring large areas of New Zealand and covering many hundreds of miles over several months. Alice Mitchell of Gore, for example, attracted a great deal of interest as she toured throughout New Zealand. Alice is said to be the first woman to ride a bicycle in Dunedin, having taught herself to ride in 1892.¹²¹ Being of poor health, she discovered cycling to be of great benefit, and embarked on a series of rides, initially near her home town of Gore, and later throughout New Zealand. During the Christmas of 1894, Alice Mitchell prepared herself for a tour to the North Island, by cycling with her younger sister from Gore to Bluff and back in two days (about 120 miles), and included a boat trip to Stewart Island. In early January 1895, Alice and her brother George embarked on a long tour, travelling over 1,000 miles in three months. It took them just seven days to reach Christchurch. Most of the journey was undertaken in thick fog, drizzle, driving rain, and head winds. Two rivers were waded, and at times the mud on the roads was so bad they had to scrape it from their bicycles in order to keep riding. From Christchurch they took a steamer to Wellington, and continued north after a week's stay in Petone. After a hard six mile walk over the Rimutaka range, they enjoyed smooth riding until their destination, Masterton. Their return journey was altogether a pleasanter trip, although they still had headwinds to contend with on the Canterbury Plains. During their journey they stayed at a series of inns or with friends. They

118. *NZW*, 14 January 1893, 9.

119. *Ibid.*

120. *NZW*, 2 January 1897, 18. A. E. Preece was a well-known local photographer; many of his photographs are held in the Pictorial Archive of the Canterbury Museum. Mr. Preece started cycling in Christchurch on a velocipede in 1879, when there were reputedly about six riders in the whole city.

121. *The Southern Standard*, October 14 1892, page unknown.

carried very little luggage, having shipped a box of clothes to Petone. For much of her trip Alice Mitchell expressed gratitude for the numerous occasions on which they were able to dry their clothes and borrow replacement garments. The cost of the journey was just over £5, excluding the five shillings carriage fee for the bicycles on the steamer.¹²² Alice and her sister Lizzie undertook another extensive journey in March 1896, this time through Central Otago.¹²³

In similar style, Mrs Curtis and her husband undertook a 500 mile tour from Stratford (in the North Island) to Dunedin, *via* Nelson, the West Coast, Arthur's Pass, and Canterbury. The journey took two months. She was believed to be the first woman to take this route.¹²⁴ Spurred on by the achievements of others, even novices attempted long journeys. In 1898, Mrs Ellis, for example, who had only been riding for a few weeks, rode from Waiiau to Christchurch (about 75 miles) in two days. Not only was she commended for her efforts, but comment was made as to the trip time given her model of bicycle.¹²⁵

To add a degree of certainty to their tours, women were able to consult the numerous New Zealand travel guide books which were produced for the benefit of overseas tourists. Using these guides, they could decide where they would like to visit and could find out about the condition of existing roads, what kind of transport, communication services and accommodation they could rely on, and estimate how long it might take them to get there.¹²⁶ Cyclists could also consult the *New Zealand Wheelman* for touring information, as detailed reports of journeys were regularly submitted. The most useful information, however, was found in the *New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette* and, later, in the *Pocket Book and Diary*.¹²⁷ The *New Zealand*

122. This was later refunded after a complaint was lodged to the steamer company, on the grounds that the travellers had no other luggage and stayed with their machines for the voyage. *NZW*, May 11 1895, 4.

123. *OW*, March 19 1896, 34.

124. *NZW*, March 23 1895, 4.

125. *NZW*, October 19 1898, 9.

126. M. Moseley, *Illustrated Guide to Christchurch and Neighbourhood* (Christchurch: J. T. Smith, 1885); Ernest E. Billbrough, ed., *Brett's Handy Guide to New Zealand*, Illustrated Jubilee Edition (Auckland: H. Brett, 1890); *New Zealand Tours and Excursions: Tourist Guide to the Lakes, Mountains and Fiords* (Wellington: John Mackay, Government Printer, 1898), one of a series of books covering different areas of New Zealand; Richard Wedderspoon, *The New Zealand Illustrated Tourist Guide: The Most Wonderful Scenic Paradise in the World* (Christchurch: Simpson and Williams, [1925]).

127. The *Gazette* was the monthly magazine of the New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club (NZCTC), which was founded in June 1896 to encourage and facilitate touring in all parts of New Zealand. It published handbooks, maps, and its own gazette, to give reliable information about roads, hotels, repair facilities and places of interest. Tourist guidebooks for New Zealand were by no means a new phenomenon, but they assumed travel was by boat, rail, or coach, not bicycle. *The New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Pocket Book and Diary, 1897-98* (NZCTC: Wellington, 1898) was about seventy pages long, and contained the following information: a list of officers of the association including the Consuls for each region; Prospectus; Rules, Riding Regulations, Cycling By-laws of Local Bodies; Hints about Cycling; Directions for Repairing Tyres; Carriage of Cycles (on railways and steamships); Hints on Management of Double Tube Tyres; Cycling with a Camera; Cycling Dress for Ladies; Some Good Cycling Tours;

Cyclists Touring Club (NZCTC) systematically gathered and organised travel information relating to the whole country and published this in its magazine. As well as publishing cycling maps which marked popular cycling routes (Figures 4 and 5), it listed hotels sympathetic to cyclists' needs and this subsequently developed into a network of accommodation houses offering special rates (including prices for meals and beds) to members of the NZCTC. Each issue of the *Gazette* published detailed descriptions of cycle routes, which included the number of hills to be expected and their degree of difficulty to cycle over, and identified the cycle repairers in each town. Members contributed their own accounts of trips they had undertaken, and they often offered advice to potential tourists on how to improve the journeys. Through the *Gazette*, many women solicited cycling partners by placing advertisements for proposed trips.

From September 1897, a 'Ladies' Page' appeared regularly in the *Gazette*. These ladies' pages concentrated on the information most useful to touring cyclists, such as how to repair bicycles, tips on riding skills, hints about luggage, food, and clothing. Like the other cycling magazines, however, the pervading underlying theme was concerned with female conduct and appearance. The *New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette* ran successfully into the early-twentieth century. It was eventually subsumed into the pages of the *New Zealand Wheelman* in 1901, where it regularly appeared until the end of that year and was never revived.¹²⁸ In its place, a column focusing on motoring interests appeared, signalling a new phase in the modernisation of New Zealand society.

The management of clothes and equipment on cycling tours was a particular concern for women. Their garments were bulkier and heavier than men's, and women had to consider appearances by keeping their clothing in as good a condition as possible for the duration of trips. Women benefitted from the wisdom and advice of those who had cycled before them, and were able to glean abundant information about clothing from local cycling magazines, newspapers, and books.¹²⁹ A useful publication was Lillias Campbell Davidson's book, *Hints to Lady Travellers, At Home and Abroad*, published in 1889, which dealt extensively with the subject

Tabulated List of Hotels, Consuls, and Repairers; Phases of the Moon, Sunset and Sunrise; Riding Record; Calendar 1898; Diary. The book cost one shilling, and was available through stationers or the club secretary. It is not clear if subsequent annual editions were produced, but there was discussion about producing regional guidebooks (*NZCTCG*, 15 February 1900, 84).

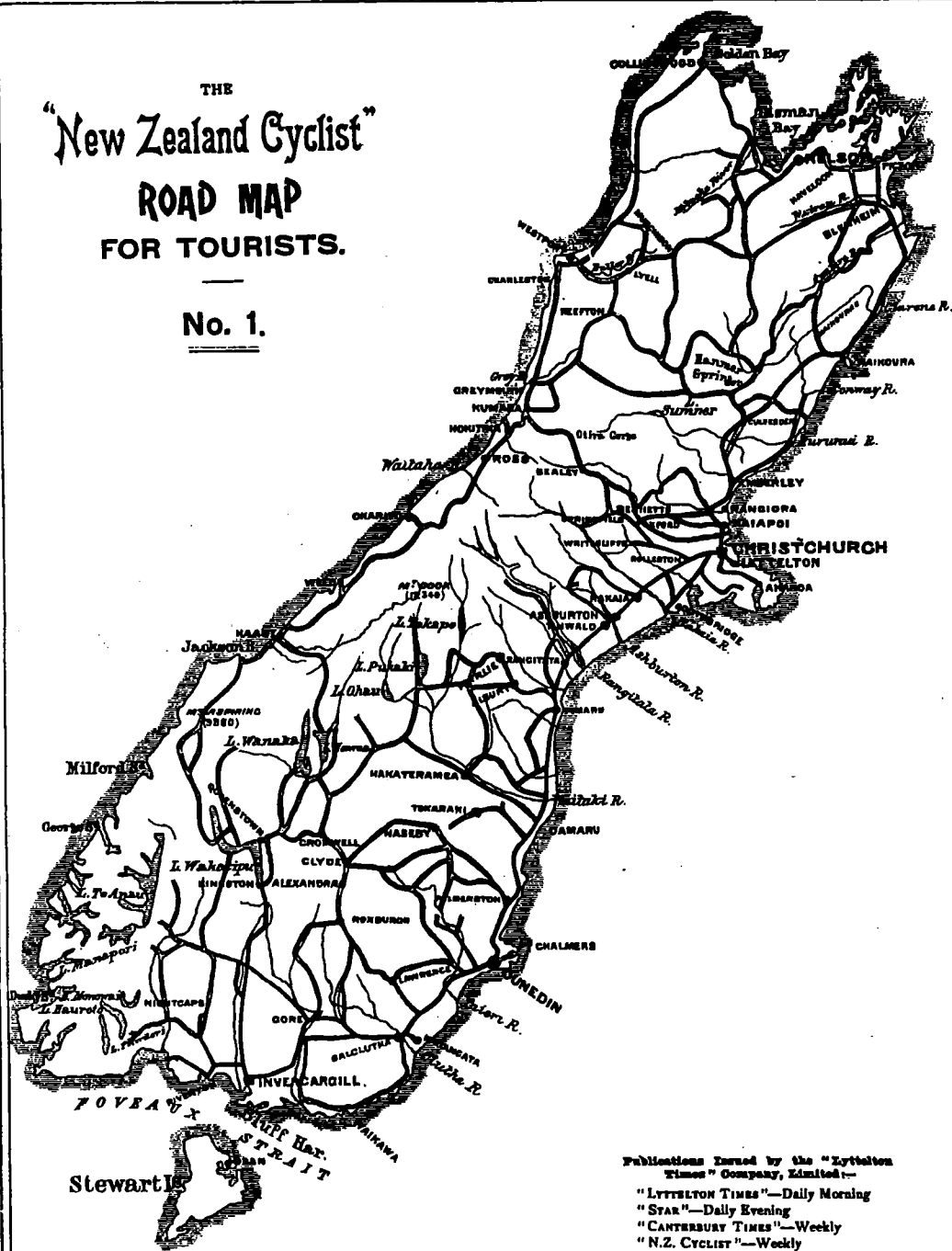
128. The last issue I found was dated August, 1900. It is unclear from this source what eventually happened to the club and its gazette; most likely it evolved into the present-day Automobile Association. Unfortunately the archives for the early years of the Automobile Association are scant, and no material was found preceding 1900. More detailed research about the eventual fate of the New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club was beyond the scope of this study.

129. Local cycling magazines and newspapers reproduced whole sections of British and American books advising women about cycle touring.

Supplement to the New Zealand Cyclist.

THE "New Zealand Cyclist" ROAD MAP FOR TOURISTS.

No. 1.



Publications Issued by the "Lyttelton Times" Company, Limited:-
 "LYTTELTON TIMES"—Daily Morning
 "STAR"—Daily Evening
 "CANTERBURY TIMES"—Weekly
 "N.Z. CYCLIST"—Weekly

Printed and Published by JAMES CLYDE WATSON, of Carlton Mill Road, Merivale, for the "Lyttelton Times" Company, Limited, at the Office, Cathedral Square and (Newcastle Street, Christchurch.
 (By Permission of the New Zealand Government)

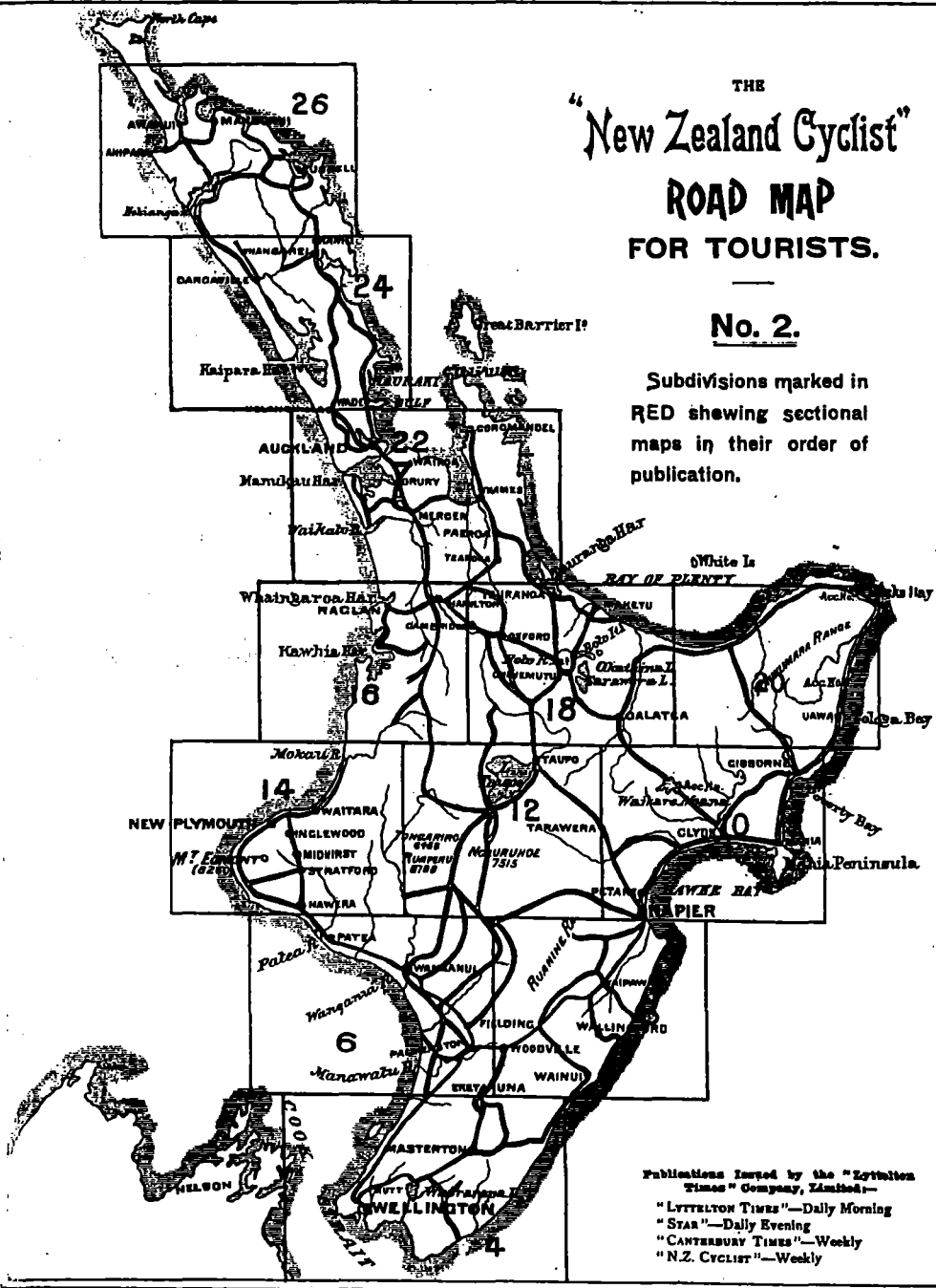
Figure 4: South Island Cycle Touring Map
 [Source: *New Zealand Cyclist*, December 1899]

Supplement to the New Zealand Cyclist.

THE
"New Zealand Cyclist"
ROAD MAP
FOR TOURISTS.

No. 2.

Subdivisions marked in
RED showing sectional
 maps in their order of
 publication.



Publications issued by the "Lyttelton Times" Company, Limited:—
 "LYTTELTON TIMES"—Daily Morning
 "STAR"—Daily Evening
 "CANTERBURY TIMES"—Weekly
 "N.Z. CYCLIST"—Weekly

Printed and Published by James Clarke Wilson, of Carlton Hill Road, Moterua, for the "Lyttelton Times" Company, Limited, at the Office, Cathedral Square and Gloucester Street, Christchurch.
 (By Permission of the New Zealand Government)

Figure 5: North Island Cycle Touring Map
 [Source: New Zealand Cyclist, December 1899]

of clothing and equipment. Although Davidson's book was written before women had begun riding bicycles, her counsel was of an enduring nature.¹³⁰ Lady Beatrice Violet Greville, an English writer with an interest in sport and whose work was often quoted in New Zealand cycling magazines, also advised about clothing on cycle tours:

The difficulty with most women is the transit of clothes. For men the problem is far more easily solved. But woman's belongings are numerous, and do not bear crushing. The best way, of course, is to send on a trunk or portmanteau to the large towns or places where a halt is to be made. Still even this arrangement does not do away with the necessity of taking something on one's bicycle. The skeleton carrier fastening to the front forks, which can be made to bear 56 [sic] lb weight, or another on the back stays, should be sufficient.

Let me impress on women the absolute necessity of wearing flannel on tour, as the cotton blouses most girls prefer are very apt to cause chills, besides which flannel is really lighter and cooler to wear, as men will know. The skirt must not be too heavy. I have known many women tire before they should, owing to the weight of their dress. A light serge or tweed is the best possible wear.¹³¹

New Zealand women could also turn to the ladies' pages in the *New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette* for more parochial information, or consult 'Wahine Pirori's' advice in the *NZCTC Pocket Book and Diary, 1897-98*, where she emphasised four important principles: "first, wear nothing but pure woollen garments; secondly, have them well cut; thirdly, do not overclothe the body; and, fourthly, in the event of a long ride, take a change or send one on to your stopping-place."¹³² The section for ladies in the *Pocket Book* documented in great detail all aspects of the cycle touring woman's wardrobe: knickerbockers, gaiters, stockings, shoes, skirt and coat, hats, waterproofs, gloves, and underwear.

Although most of the major rivers had been bridged and the condition of major roads was considerably improved by the 1890s, there were still situations requiring cyclists to dismount and look for alternative ways of proceeding. Whatever route cyclists chose, it was likely that they would have to ford several rivers and streams, or carry their bicycles over very rough patches in the roads. For many touring cyclists, the first time along a particular route could result in frequent wrong turns, since roads were at times indistinct and routes were seldom clearly marked. In his report of his trip from Christchurch to Dunedin in 1897, Marcus Marks described the road between Rolleston Junction and the Selwyn River as "merely a track through the tussocks."¹³³ 'T. H. B.' noted that some signposts would be helpful at the Waipara River

130. Lillias Campbell Davidson, *Hints to Lady Travellers, At Home and Abroad* (London: Iliffe and Son, 1889).

131. *OW*, 19 October 1899, 52, reproduced from the English paper, *The Graphic*.

132. *The New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Pocket Book and Diary, 1897-98*, (NZCTC: Wellington, 1898), 41.

133. *NZCTCG*, January 1897, 37-8.

(North Canterbury) which, if not fordable, could be crossed using the footbridge alongside the railway bridge; signposts would help cyclists find the road on the other side of the river.¹³⁴ An account of a cycling trip from Christchurch to the West Coast *via* Arthurs Pass highlighted some of the frustrations and difficulties women experienced when touring by bicycle. 'A member of the Atalanta Club' cycled with her companions, Mr. and Mrs. Z., battling strong head winds all the way; they were able to find little food to eat on their two-day journey, had several mechanical failures, and took an hour to cross the major river, and only then with the assistance of a roadman who carried the narrator across, Mrs. Z. having to make the journey by coach because her bicycle had irreparably broken down.¹³⁵ With heavy bicycles and garments, rough roads and an absence of detailed information about the road conditions in some parts of the country, it is easy to appreciate how women who toured by bicycle might have symbolised for many the New Woman.

Opportunities for Exercise and Health

By the time cycling had become popular with women, the associated health benefits had been firmly established. Like male cyclists before them, women testified that cycling helped to restore and maintain their health, as well as encouraging them to enjoy more fresh air. 'Porowhita' herself had discovered this.¹³⁶

The kind of cycling most associated with exercise and health were rides of between five and twenty-five miles, two to three times a week. During the week, keen cyclists rode almost daily along popular routes that usually took them to the limits of the city or to nearby scenic vantage points. Christchurch women, for example, regularly cycled to Sumner Beach, the Heathcote valley, Papanui, or to Riccarton, destinations between five and ten miles from the city centre. Dunedin cyclists usually rode to St. Clair beach, about ten miles from the centre of the city. Once a week, cyclists embarked on longer and more strenuous trips to neighbouring townships, such as Kaiapoi, Rangiora, or Tai Tapu in Canterbury, or Mosgiel or the Taieri Plains in Otago, for example. The more dedicated and fit riders cycled daily, regardless of the weather, and often much farther afield.¹³⁷

The health benefits of cycling were both physical and psychological. Grandiose claims were made about cycling, all manner of disorders disappearing under its influence, and eminent

134. *NZCTCG*, January 1897, 37.

135. *NZC*, 17 April 1897, 5-6.

136. *WR*, September 1898, 8.

137. There were many examples of women who cycled in storms, rain and the snow, and others who thought nothing of a long daily ride.

physicians were often quoted to this effect. As early as the mid-1880s, when tricycling was popular amongst women, doctors advocated cycling as good exercise, provided it was done in moderation. Dr. Benjamin Ward Richardson, a physician who had presented papers to the Medical Society of London, and was himself a cyclist, was quoted extensively in the *New Zealand Wheelman*. In a book he wrote in 1885, he said:

For women to try to compete with men, or even with each other, is to spoil all the value which tricycling, reasonably conducted, would confer on them. With much respect, I should suggest that women, even when they are young, should be content to ride fifty miles in one day as their maximum effort on such roads as at present exist. For ordinary practice from fifteen to twenty-five miles a day is quite sufficient.¹³⁸

Another English physician, Dr. Jennings, claimed that cycling had a "curative influence in many diseases, more especially nervous disorders, with all the evils to which they give rise"¹³⁹

Dr. Jennings also claimed to know a woman who was cured of 'varix' (abnormal dilation of the vein or artery) by using a tricycle, and that he was "acquainted with numerous facts concerning patients suffering from neuralgia and other nervous affections who have been restored to their habitual vigorous health by the use of the tricycle."¹⁴⁰

Both Dr. Richardson and Dr. Jennings discussed clothing in the context of health. Dr. Jennings summarised the links between cycling, clothing and health in the following manner:

In the first place, a lady cyclist should be so dressed as to run no risk of taking cold, or of injuring herself by using unsuitable garments. In the second place, according to the greater or less care she exercises in fulfilling this condition, the exercise will become either a pleasure or a weariness.¹⁴¹

Sir Benjamin's advice about the nature of suitable clothing was more specific:

In regard to substance and to freedom from tightness, the dress of the woman should be similar to that of the man. Of the dress itself, the skirt should be short and not too full, and it should be suspended from the shoulders, not from the waist.¹⁴²

The association of cycling, clothing and health was also advocated by New Zealand cyclists. Dress reformers Kate Walker and her fiancé J. R. Wilkinson, amongst others, extolled the virtues of dress reform as a way of enhancing better health through physical exercise and the easier breathing facilitated by looser clothing.¹⁴³ Physicians like Richardson and Jennings, and dress

138. Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson, *The Tricycle in Relation to Health and Recreation* (London: William Isbister, 1885), 89.

139. Oscar Jennings, *Cycling and Health / La Santé par le Tricycle*, translated by J. Crosse Johnston from the French of the third edition, Paris, 1889 (London: Illiffe and Son, [1890]), 88.

140. *Ibid.*, 89.

141. *Ibid.*, 84.

142. Richardson, 1885, 89.

143. Kate Walker and J. R. Wilkinson, *Notes on Dress Reform and What It Implies* (Christchurch: Simpson and Williams, 1893), 24-6; Dr. Kate Mitchell, *The Gentlemen's Book of Hygiene* (London: Henry and Co., 1892), 166-7; Malthus, 1989, 38.

reformers such as Walker and Wilkinson, were sympathetic to women cycling, believing it to be a healthy activity.

There were also those who were *opposed* to women's cycling on health grounds, however. Issues of cycling and health escalated once women began riding bicycles in the 1890s. Whilst I will anticipate the cautions expressed over cycling and health here, the arguments will be more fully discussed in Chapter 4.

Despite the general conviction that cycling was a healthy form of exercise, many physicians advised cyclists that some caution was necessary. It was generally thought by society at the time that women were naturally vulnerable to illness because of their perceived inherent physical weaknesses; they were in need of protection, assistance, and guidance in matters of health.¹⁴⁴ It was argued that women were very different to men: they had smaller brains, and were weaker, more nervous and emotional than men. Women therefore needed to avoid overstrain and over-exertion, and they needed to take only moderate exercise in fresh air.¹⁴⁵ As an outdoor activity, cycling stimulated discussions about the body overheating and chills resulting from rain or cooled perspiration. Most cycling magazines ran regular columns on health, and the efficacy of new fabrics was frequently discussed in relation to the regulation of body temperature. The kind of advice offered by Dr. Jennings was typical. He recommended, for example, woollen undergarments, for lady cyclists:

They should consist of as few pieces as possible, and those at once warm and light. The free play of the limbs should be in no way impeded. Consequently these garments must not be close-fitting, and the weight should be supported from the shoulder rather than the waist. It should be equally adapted for walking and cycling . . . capable of resisting the inclemency of the weather.¹⁴⁶

Likewise, many other cycle writers urged women to adopt woollen clothing.¹⁴⁷ Walker and

144. H. R. Haweis, "The Mannish Girl," *The Young Woman* 5 (June 1897): 332. (Hugh Reginald Haweis (1838-1901) was a distinguished clergyman); Emily Holt, *Encyclopaedia of Etiquette: What to Write, What to Wear, What to Do, What to Say: A Book of Manners for Everyday Use* (London/New York: McClure, Phillips and Co., 1901), 367; Helen Lenskyj, "Canadian Women and Physical Activity, 1890-1930: Media Views," in *From 'Fair Sex' to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Eras*, ed. J. A. Mangan and Roberta Park (England: Frank Cass, 1987), 214.

145. Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 8, 77-8, 80; see also Erik Olssen, "Truby King and the Plunket Society: An Analysis of a Prescriptive Ideology," *NZJH* 15, no. 1 (1981): 3-23.

146. Jennings, [1890], 86.

147. For example, F. J. Erskine, *Lady Cycling* (London: Walter Scott, 1897), 20-1; H. C. Clark, *Hygienic Bicycling: A Pocket Manual for the Healthful Use of the Wheel* (Delaware: H. C. Clark, 1897), 34; Maria E. Ward, *Bicycling for Ladies, With Hints as to the Art of Wheeling: Advice to Beginners - Dress - Care of the Bicycle - Mechanics - Training - Exercise, etc., etc.* (New York: Brentano's, 1896), 93. Publishers and agents frequently advertised these books and others in the New Zealand cycling magazines, and they could be obtained by mail. However, I located only a few of these books in New Zealand, despite the office of NZW stocking these and other overseas cycling books and magazines in their

Wilkinson, who were aware of the sentiments of the American and English dress reform associations, also paid attention to the warming properties of clothing in their treatise on dress reform; they advised women to wear woollen clothing, because it was believed to be beneficial in "preventing sudden chills after perspiration, and in allowing exhalations to escape from the skin."¹⁴⁸

Concerns for health and fitness were consistent with society's widespread growing interest in and argument for the physical well-being of women through sport and exercise. These arguments were couched in scientific language which sat comfortably with the rational and scientific thinking about women's wellbeing during the nineteenth century discussed in Chapter 1.¹⁴⁹ Most cyclists were aware of and interested in the health benefits and these were promoted in almost every cycling publication of the time. This concern with health and fitness was also consistent with the development of physical education for girls, and its introduction into school curricula, and health reforms for women generally.¹⁵⁰

Cycling to Make a Statement

For a small proportion of women, cycling offered the perfect opportunity to raise the profile of issues such as dress reform, women's suffrage, and temperance, as well as to promote the idea of nineteenth-century women's social progress in general.

Dangerous clothing was a primary issue for dress reformers who worked vigorously to prevent dress-related accidents, and who argued for more sensible styles of clothing, or 'rational dress'.¹⁵¹ For women on bicycles, the dangers of cycling were exacerbated by their persistent use of unsuitable clothing. Accidents involving women's dress were quite common in all aspects of daily life, not just when cycling. According to Malthus, the dress reform movement was very active in New Zealand, and many of the women who began cycling in the early 1890s were

library for cyclists to borrow. I have calculated here that women did read such books.

148. Walker and Wilkinson, 1893, 24.

149. Kathleen McCrone, *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of English Women 1870-1914* (London: Routledge, 1988), 193.

150. McCrone, 1988, 9-10, 93.

151. An article in the first edition of the English *Rational Dress Society's Gazette* summarised the safety concerns of the dress reform movement. Amongst the dangers listed were the flammability of certain fabrics and the potential for voluminous draperies to catch fire near fireplaces and naked flame lamps; the "mechanical effect of an unnatural and cumbrous" dress which might impede egress from public buildings (such as theatres) in emergencies; tripping and falling on staircases, or when embarking and disembarking from carriages and trains; catching garments in machinery. Examples of such accidents were given. "Dangers of Women's Dress," *The Rational Dress Society's Gazette*, no. 1, 1888, 2-3.

ardent advocates of rational dress.¹⁵² Composition and weight of fabrics, length of skirts, warmth, and tightness of fit were all elements of concern. The merits of dress reform were widely acclaimed by cyclists: the absence of wind resistance, freedom of the limbs, less mud and grease, and no fear of the dress catching in pedals and wheels.¹⁵³ The unsuitability of garments was highlighted because cycling was such a public activity; thus the bicycle served admirably as a means by which to publicise inappropriate styles of clothing as well as to advertise functional alternatives.

Women's cycling clubs had to make decisions about where they stood on the issue of dress reform. Of the dozen women who joined the 200 men in the Mimiro club's first parade at the opening of the 1895 season, three women wore bifurcated rational dress; these women were not censured from the club.¹⁵⁴ At the first annual meeting of the Mimiro Cycling Club, however, its members discussed the standard of dress and it was resolved that members should wear a skirt (colour unspecified) when riding, but that they could wear whatever they preferred when not with the club.¹⁵⁵ The dress issue seemed to be of less subsequent concern to the Mimiro club members than it was to the Christchurch women, probably because it capitalised on the experience of the Atalanta club by dealing with the issue explicitly and rationally at the earliest opportunity. Its members did not contest the dress reform rule thereafter.

Although cycling never played a critical part in the suffrage or temperance movements, it was used symbolically by both to represent their underlying principles. Likewise, female suffrage and temperance seldom featured in cycling journalism, unless there was a convergence of interests. It is likely that, given the already controversial nature of women's cycling in the *early* 1890s, pioneering cyclists consciously avoided arousing further prejudice by airing other controversial issues such as universal female suffrage; dress reform had already proved a case in point. It was only after the passage of the *Suffrage Bill*, on 19 September 1893, that 'Theta' devoted any significant space to the issue. A few weeks after the event, she drew a clear parallel between the role of cycling and the achievement of the female franchise in expanding women's

152. Malthus, 1989. Malthus's article provides an excellent account of the underlying issues of dress reform and how it was promoted in New Zealand. 'Rational dress' was classified into two kinds of reform, 'minor reform', which accommodated wearing sensible skirts, and 'higher reform', which consisted of adopting bifurcated garments. Many early cyclists favoured bifurcated garments such as knickerbockers or bloomers; later in the 1890s, when knickerbockers had failed to make an impression on the cycling sorority, divided skirts were frequently worn. Although bifurcated, these garments, if well cut and well made, looked like ordinary skirts when off the bicycle. Walker and Wilkinson, 1893, 14-5.

153. *NZW*, 5 June 1894, 4-5.

154. *OW*, 10 October 1895, 37.

155. *OW*, 13 August 1896, 37. There were only a few dress reformers in this club, e.g., Eleanor Horne, who was at one time the club captain.

expectations for the future:

. . . not . . . as the cause of cycling girls or even as the result of them; but as being, along with cycling, a sign of woman's great awakening As the dainty wheel gives her a larger world to live and move in, so the wheel of progress has now given her a larger world to think in.¹⁵⁶

'Theta' predicted that in due course, resistance to both women's suffrage and women's cycling would dissipate:

Every day now cools the ire of the anti-suffrage. This means that every day now sees fewer people who consider the cycliste [*sic*] a disgrace to her sex; and every day now sees fewer people who object to a woman dressing herself in the way she thinks best for work and exercise.¹⁵⁷

The links between suffrage and cycling were possibly stronger than the evidence so far uncovered suggests. Many suffrage campaigners were also cyclists, and it is likely that many cyclists were in favour of female suffrage. Kate Sheppard, the leader of the women's suffrage campaign, was herself a dedicated cyclist, and she subscribed to the *New Zealand Wheelman* from its first issue. The fact that she was often seen cycling in Christchurch may well have influenced the non-cycling public to associate cycling with suffrage.¹⁵⁸

There was also an association between cycling and temperance, which was often expressed by the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The New Zealand branch's magazine, the *White Ribbon*, regularly ran a cycling column compiled by 'Porowhita' but, curiously, the themes she covered seldom made an explicit link between cycling and temperance, focusing instead on items of general interest to lady cyclists. In contrast, the American movement exploited the cycling/temperance partnership by upholding its founder, Frances Willard, as an icon of social progress. Willard was known to New Zealand cyclists through the New Zealand cycling literature which cited several extracts from a book she wrote about learning to ride at the age of fifty-three years. Her book, *A Wheel Within a Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle, With Some Reflections by the Way*, was an allegory of the qualities developed in her temperance work, exalting the spiritual and moral lessons she had learned from cycling.¹⁵⁹ Willard believed that persistence of will, patience, and a strong spirit, for example, were essential for mastering the bicycle:

That which caused the many failures I had in learning the bicycle had caused me failures

156. NZW, 14 October 1893, 4.

157. *Ibid.*

158. Judith Devaliant concludes that Kate Sheppard probably used her bicycle for short recreational trips as well as transport on fine days. Judith Devaliant, *Kate Sheppard: A Biography* (Auckland: Penguin, 1992), 86-7.

159. Frances E. Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle, With Some Reflections by the Way* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1895).

in life; namely, a certain fearful looking for a judgment; a too vivid realization of the uncertainty of everything about me; an underlying doubt - at once, however [and this is all that saved me], matched and overcome by the determination not to give in to it . . . I finally concluded that all failure was from a wobbling will rather than a wobbling wheel. I felt that indeed the will is the wheel of the mind . . .¹⁶⁰

Frances Willard, and others like her, became known as the 'New Woman', a term for women who embraced social change which would expand their opportunities in all spheres of life.¹⁶¹ In New Zealand, Britain, the United States and other Western societies, women on bicycles became synonymous with the New Woman, which irked the large numbers of women who rode purely for pleasure and with only their social status in mind. Both the Atalanta and Mimirol cycling clubs were founded by women interested in social progress, and clearly attracted like-minded members. The Atalanta Cycling Club, for example, boasted a number of New Women such as dress reformer Kate Wilkinson,¹⁶² Alice Burn, and Edith Statham who, in addition to teaching cycling skills to women, was a founding member of the Dunedin branch of the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, and a long-standing advocate for better roads.¹⁶³

The Problems and Practicalities of Cycling

The practicalities and problems associated with cycling were numerous and challenging to women. In addition to coping with the demands of managing their bicycles, negotiating their

160. Willard, 1895, 22-6.

161. Roberta Park, "Sport, Gender and Society in a Transatlantic Victorian Perspective," in Mangan and Park, 1987, 67. It was middle-class women who were seen as 'New Women' and who predominated in cycling. Marital status did not seem to make any difference; both married and single women cycled. See also Lillian Faderman, "Part II: The Nineteenth Century, A. Loving Friends," 145-230 for a comprehensive and enlightened discussion of the 'New Woman'.

162. Reference to Kate Wilkinson (*née* Walker) as a New Woman: *NZW*, 11 May 1895, 10; 10 August 1895, 9.

163. Edith Statham was a noted worker in many welfare organisations (Obituary, *Otago Daily Times*, 15 February 1951, 9). On her arrival in Dunedin from Christchurch around 1895, Edith quickly organised the establishment of Dunedin's all-female cycling club, the Mimirol Ladies' Cycling Club and acted as its secretary. She was an enterprising individual, advertising herself as a typist (she had previously trained as a private nurse but had to give up this work because of ill health) in the Trades column of *Stone's Directory* from 1896, the same year in which the Mimirol Ladies' Cycling Club was listed amongst the cycling clubs in the Sports Section. A community-minded citizen, Edith was active in a number of causes throughout her long life. In Dunedin she was also on the committee for the St. Clair Track (responsible for maintaining a major roadway). In 1899 she was Secretary for the newly formed Society for the Protection of Women and Children, working alongside Dr Emily Siedeberg and Ethel Benjamin (*Stone's Directory*, 1900, 44). In Auckland she served on the committee of the Auckland Cycle Roads League, was secretary of the Victoria League, a prominent worker with the Navy League, and involved in the early days of the Girl Guide movement. She devoted fifteen years as inspector of soldiers' graves and graves of historical interest throughout New Zealand, and worked on the women's branch of the Medical Services Corp. She died in Auckland, aged ninety-seven.

way safely over rough ground and through both irresolute and unyielding traffic, women also had to deal with the unsolicited attention of onlookers, and the unpredictable mechanical idiosyncrasies of their cycles. These problems were occasionally compounded by sartorial impediments and, collectively, such difficulties fuelled many of the debates about the suitability of cycling for women. There were ample examples and anecdotes which pointed to the alleged unsuitability of cycling for women.

The Perils

The threats and taunts of disapproving onlookers, as well as the possibility of road accidents, presented serious risks to the physical and mental well-being of women cyclists. Harassment ranged from intrusive curiosity to physical intimidation. At the lesser extreme, women were simply stopped and questioned without much regard as to how menaced or embarrassed this might make them feel. In 1893, for example, when few women were cycling, some elderly men in Timaru considered themselves entitled to stop a young cyclist:

The other day the City Fathers in a body stopped her, requested her to dismount, and inspected her machine . . . with the gravity befitting their exalted stations. The correspondent trusts the Atalantean was not too embarrassed.¹⁶⁴

Young boys taunted or teased them and women cyclists reported being the butt of choice epithets by 'hoodlums', but more often people simply stared at them as they rode by. In Dunedin, it was not just unruly individuals who insulted women on bicycles; members of the Mimirol Cycling Club were "subjected to annoyance by 'men' as well as larrikins . . ."¹⁶⁵ More seriously, however, women's physical safety was sometimes threatened. In its advocacy role, the Mimirol Club represented one means by which women might enjoy their cycling in safety. The issue of harassment was a pressing concern for Dunedin women where the situation was said to be comparable to Melbourne, notorious for its censure of female cyclists.¹⁶⁶ One report of what cycling was like for women in Melbourne, claimed:

. . . every woman who cycles in the public ways creates a furore among the men of the vicinity. Larrikins chase her, well-dressed persons yell for her to 'get off and push,' other women make spiteful remarks, and there is a wide-spread inclination to make the ride exciting.¹⁶⁷

Unlike Christchurch, Dunedin citizens had seldom seen women on bicycles until the mid-1890s.¹⁶⁸ So many women complained of "the great annoyance they were subjected to when

164. *NZW*, 24 June 1893, 11.

165. *NZW*, 16 October 1895, 12.

166. *NZW*, 16 October, 1895, 4; *OW*, 26 March, 1896, 35.

167. *NZW*, 10 August 1895, 6.

168. *NZC*, 11 May 1897, 5.

out riding from larrikins *etc.*," that a deputation waited on the mayor to find out if there was any by-law that the women could appeal to. The mayor, Mr. Fish,¹⁶⁹ suggested they ask the editors of the papers to insert a small paragraph calling attention to this annoyance. Several articles resulted, supported by letters from some of the male cycling clubs in the province, but it is not clear if any practical assistance resulted from Mr. Fish's suggestion.¹⁷⁰ The most likely target for harassment was a woman riding in bifurcated dress. For example, one Christchurch cyclist riding with a 'gentleman' along the Sumner Road reported the insult: "Mind you don't split your pants!"¹⁷¹ This comment suggests she was wearing rational dress, an unusual sight in 1894.

The most reliable insurance for safe riding in the streets was to ride in the company of at least one other rider, preferably a male. There is little mention of chaperonage for women on bicycles in New Zealand, although it was practised in both Britain and the United States.¹⁷² According to Maud Cooke and other such etiquette writers, women needed to be accompanied at all times.¹⁷³ On its wane in Britain, Europe and the United States by the mid-1890s, chaperonage was still considered by some people to be important during the entire decade. In New Zealand, although formally arranged chaperonage was rare, it appears to have been more a topic of conversation than acted upon, especially in the context of cycling. Ultimately, good manners and common sense were considered a woman's best form of protection from undesirable attention. In Chapter 4, I discuss more fully the issue of women's solitary travel and her potential vulnerability on the street.

One of the primary concerns of all cyclists was the possibility of serious accidents. Two key factors contributed to this concern: the likelihood of colliding with other road users, and the dangerous conditions of the roads.

Women were discouraged from venturing onto public roads until they could ride a bicycle skilfully and could recover from side-slipping without falling off; they were regularly

169. Mr H. S. Fish was well-known for his anti-suffrage position.

170. *OW*, 13 August, 1896, 37.

171. *NZW*, 6 October 1894, 9.

172. Frederick Alderson, *Bicycling: A History* (New York / Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 86; Au Fait, *Social Observances: A Series of Essays on Practical Etiquette* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1896), 113. A Chaperon Cyclists Association was formed in England ". . . to provide gentlewomen of good social position to conduct ladies on bicycle excursions and tours The chaperon provides her own cycle. The association is not responsible for accidents, but every reasonable precaution to prevent them will be taken." (*Queen*, May 1896, cited in Alderson, 1972, 86).

173. There was a set code of practice about how this should occur. Married women could chaperon for young women, men for married women, or a servant might follow, according to American etiquette writer, Maud Cooke. Maud Cooke, *Social Etiquette or Manners and Customs of Polite Society* (Chicago: National Book Concern, 1896), 343. Sometimes elder female relatives or paid companions were engaged.

entreated to exercise caution on the roads, especially when turning.¹⁷⁴ Most New Zealand roads were unsealed until the early-twentieth century, when the increased use of the motorcar demanded better road surfaces. Since the 1870s, cyclists had drawn attention to the poor state of both urban and rural roads. In summer, urban roads were slippery and wet because they were routinely watered to keep the dust down, and in winter, they were muddy and boggy because of the rain. Large ruts developed in the most heavily used roads, making negotiation by bicycle difficult. These difficulties were compounded by the presence of other road users.

The only pragmatic alternative to the dangers presented by poor road conditions was to ride on the footpaths, but this was illegal, and many women were fined for this misdemeanour. Since several years of cyclists lobbying about poor roads had failed to make substantial improvements, and when the establishment of dedicated cycle paths looked remote, even cyclists who disapproved of footpath riding began to concede that it was the only sensible alternative.

‘Theta’ was strongly opposed to riding on the footpath, but she had a change of heart by 1899:

Although I have been one of the great wheeling brigade for something like six years I do not remember the streets of Christchurch and suburbs being so bad for cycling as they are at the present time, and it is indeed a great boon that should be appreciated by all cyclists to be allowed the privilege of using the footpaths, and I earnestly hope such privilege will not be abused. I am a strong opponent of footpath riding, especially in places where roads can lay any claim at all to decency, but there are many places where there is little traffic and the roads are positively unrideable.¹⁷⁵

Serious traffic conflicts arose as cyclists, horses, and horse-drawn vehicles competed for road space, and, as ‘Theta’ intimated above, these problems had not been resolved by the late 1890s. Despite the efforts of various cycling organisations, such as the Cyclists’ Touring Club, the League of New Zealand Wheelmen, and the Cyclists’ Alliance to regulate non-cycle traffic, ‘road hogs’ (*i.e.*, any road user or pedestrian who interfered with cyclists on the road) were deemed to be on the increase. Quite frequently, drivers of horse-drawn vehicles deliberately ran riders (including female riders) off the road, disobeyed the road rules by driving on the wrong side, cut corners when turning, and failed to display lights at night, *etc.*¹⁷⁶ Many traffic violations and accidents involving cyclists were resolved in the courts, and where cyclists were patently aggrieved, they were represented by the New Zealand Cyclists’ Touring Club.¹⁷⁷

Although road users were aware of the basic rules of the road, many drivers and riders

174. *NZW*, 21 June 1899, 5.

175. *NZW*, 14 June 1899, 5.

176. *NZW*, 2 November 1898, 16-1. The irony should not be missed here: cyclists themselves were called ‘road hogs’ by non-cycling road users, and were accused of the same transgressions as other road users.

177. *NZW*, 13 March 1897, 17; *NZCTCG*, 1 April 1897, 60.

failed to heed them, and this increased the likelihood of accidents in built-up areas. Collisions with animals, carts, and other cyclists were a frequent occurrence which often resulted in serious injuries and lengthy stays in hospital. Sometimes road users endangered cyclists simply by their carelessness, such as by cutting corners when turning, going around corners on the wrong side of the road, or passing too closely to cyclists. Others, however, deliberately went out of their way to inconvenience cyclists, or to run them off the road, such was their prejudice against cyclists on the roads.¹⁷⁸

Women themselves were very often responsible for causing traffic accidents. This fact prompted an interesting letter to the *Christchurch Press*, suggesting that women be prevented from riding in crowded streets for their own safety. 'Cycler' noted that women rode on the wrong side of the road, rode too quickly to make an emergency stop, rode recklessly, or uncertainly, *etc.* These were all accurate observations, for not all female cyclists were competent or prudent riders. 'Cycler's' argument that many women rode merely because it was fashionable to do so and were, therefore, unlikely to be skilful riders, was not favourably received by 'Theta', who was sceptical about the sincerity of 'Cycler's' concern for female safety. She accused 'Cycler' of being "some discrepit [*sic*] old man too ancient to enjoy cycling himself and too mean to allow others to."¹⁷⁹ Clearly, cyclists felt keenly the prejudice against cycling, and not without justification.

The dangers associated with traffic behaviour and road conditions were exacerbated by women's persistent use of inappropriate garments. The most commonly reported clothing-related accidents were those where garments became entangled in the bicycle. In one accident in Christchurch, the skirt became wound around the pedals, causing the rider and her bicycle to fall over because she could not jump free. When a man arrived on the scene to help, she had to ask him to cut free her skirt. The victim later wrote in the *New Zealand Wheelman*: "Let me advise lady cyclists to watch their dress with care, if riding in cloak and skirt. One seems to naturally manipulate a skirt, but is apt to forget the need of keeping an eye to a double danger."¹⁸⁰ This accident was not as unpleasant as it could have been; some women had suffered the same fate but had fallen in the paths of horses or other cyclists. Sometimes it was the accessories which caused accidents:

A lady wheelist and a gentleman equestrian accompanied each other for a spin and a canter the other day. While in the mile road a long hairy affair - known technically as a 'boa' - which the fair one wore round her neck, got in amongst the wheels and became

178. *NZW*, 8 July 1893, 5.

179. *NZW*, 18 August 1897, 9.

180. *NZW*, 8 May 1894, 5.

wound around the axle of her machine, and, of course, drew the lady in with it . . . While in this predicament she narrowly escaped being run over by a passing cart. We would advise ladies who wish to enjoy wheeling to its fullest to leave all frills and furbelows at home.¹⁸¹

Cycling magazines suggested that such accidents were commonplace, here and overseas: "The draperies catch in the pedals, and many a bad smash, bent pedal, or broken limb is the result."¹⁸² Long skirts and undisciplined accessories were not the only aspects of dress responsible for accidents:

High-heeled boots and shoes are extremely dangerous wear for cycling. They are almost as bad as stirrups and may cause bad accidents. A lady in Devonshire was killed recently owing to the neglect of this fact.¹⁸³

Over the years, several fatalities were reported in the cycling magazines; it is not surprising, therefore, to note that many cyclists and cycling journalists were in favour of dress reform of some kind. The *New Zealand Cyclist*, for example, faithfully culled a range of overseas magazines for articles of interest to New Zealand women. These overseas items viewed cycling as the greatest agent for dress reform:

. . . for nothing can convince women of the unsuitableness of their present dress more than their newly acquired mode of locomotion. The number of skirts that have been mangled and chopped by a merciless chain wheel must be incredible.¹⁸⁴

Whilst it was important for women to be able to cycle in safety, the matter of comfort and ease of movement was another consideration in the design of cycling skirts. Fashion designers capitalised on women's vulnerability by designing safer garments. One cycling costume, for example, was made of "soft light-weight waterproof cloth, specially cut so as to prevent a wind-up in the pedals. The skirt reaches only to the ankles, and is to be worn with leggings to match the suit."¹⁸⁵ Dress reform, it seems, offered the fashion industry a lucrative spin-off.

Although bicycles were generally safer to ride than horses, cycling was still perilous, particularly in the early 1890s, given the state of the roads and chaotic traffic flows. Perceptions of women's physical and psychological vulnerability provided a strong basis for arguing the unsuitability of cycling for women, an argument reinforced by incidents of harassment, abuse, and accidents. The ensuing debate will be pursued in Chapter 4.

181. *NZW*, 11 February 1893, 9.

182. *NZC*, 3 July 1897, 5.

183. *NZC*, 3 April 1897, 3.

184. *NZC*, 11 February 1893, 7.

185. *NZW*, 10 June 1893, 6.

Mechanical Knowledge and Expertise

Amongst the many new challenges women faced as they took to cycling was the necessity of maintaining and repairing their machines. Although cycle shops were available to provide these services, many women expected to undertake their own routine maintenance and repairs such as cleaning, lubrication, and mending punctures. Some women took great pride in their mechanical knowledge and expertise. Frances Willard, who was frequently quoted in the New Zealand cycling magazines, embraced the challenge of knowing where every nut and bolt of her bicycle was, what function it had, and she wrote on this theme at length.¹⁸⁶ A reasonable level of self-sufficiency assured women a greater degree of safety in public, for they were less likely to rely on the help of strangers. This was especially important for women touring alone in remote areas where, from time to time, they did encounter unsavoury itinerants.

It seems unusual for women to *expect* to be acquainted with the mechanics of their machines for, traditionally, vehicle repairs and maintenance were the province of males. One explanation for women taking such responsibility might lie in their associating the care of the bicycle with that of horses. Most horse riders had a working knowledge of grooming, feeding, and caring for horses even if, in reality, their servants did the actual physical work. Perhaps such knowledge was simply transferred to ownership of the bicycle. The metaphorical language people used to refer to their bicycles seems to support this: bicycles were referred to as 'iron steeds', bicycle sheds were called 'stables', and other equestrian terms were applied to cycling, such as 'mounting', 'dismounting', acquiring a 'good seat'; additionally, the machine was referred to as if, like a horse, it had a personality and a will of its own.

'Altiora', like Frances Willard, believed that complete mastery of all mechanical problems was desirable:

The rider who knows not a wrench from a bicycle pump, nor the uses of either, finds her ride limited to city suburbs, while she who has thoroughly learned the science of punctures, inflations and all kinds of adjustments knows no bounds to her cycling territory, and is ready to combat any emergency.¹⁸⁷

Knowledge of bicycle mechanics helped ensure a woman's independence, even if only in relation to the bicycle. 'Altiora' urged women to practise removing and replacing the tyre, so that if the occasion arose, she could do so quickly and easily once on the "muddy roads."¹⁸⁸ Gloves were

186. Willard, 1895, 25. For Frances Willard, all aspects of cycling provided a metaphorical representation of the qualities and characteristics needed to advance social reforms; knowledge and understanding of bicycle mechanics mirrored the "patience to study and adjust our natures to those of others . . ."

187. NZC, 11 September 1897, 5.

188. NZC, 9 July 1898, 8.

recommended as an item in the repair kit, to protect hands and fingernails. As much as she exhorted women to be able to mend their own punctures, however, 'Altiora' did not expect them to do so if a male of their acquaintance was within "hailing distance."¹⁸⁹

To guide women in basic cycle mechanics, information was published in cycling books and the ladies' pages of cycling magazines. Descriptions of routine bicycle care paralleled instructions for grooming horses. Women were encouraged to check the condition of their bicycle routinely before and after each ride, and wipe it clean with an oily cloth after riding.

Since a lack of mechanical knowledge on the part of less determined cyclists was believed to be one factor which contributed to some women's declining interest in cycling. Chivalrous men were urged to assist by performing the routine cleaning and maintenance of their sisters', daughters' and wives' machines. By doing this, men kept women's bicycles in prime condition and thus helped prevent the waning enthusiasm for cycling brought on by riding cycles which did not run properly due to poor maintenance.¹⁹⁰ Loss of an opportunity for masculine chivalry seemed to be a concern for some men who felt somewhat redundant around women who could fix their own punctures. Such displaced men were only too willing to perform repairs on women's bicycles, according to a report reproduced from an English cycling paper.¹⁹¹ Although New Zealand men's feelings of redundancy were not reported, there were other expressions of male chivalry which suggests that, regardless of the ideology of the New Woman, most men expected to continue assisting women wherever possible.

Conclusions

Women's introduction to cycling and its culture in New Zealand paralleled closely many of the same experiences of women in Britain, Europe and the United States of America. Although there is little firm evidence of New Zealand women using the heavy iron velocipede in the 1870s, or of using the tricycle during the 1880s, it is clear that they welcomed with great enthusiasm the drop-framed soft-tyred safety cycle of the 1890s. The continual increase in numbers of women cycling in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century New Zealand, and in the number of women's bicycle clubs established, testified to the popularity of cycling which, as in overseas countries, peaked around 1897. The nature and intensity of public reactions to women cycling in New Zealand also mirrored those in other countries, and signalled a growing

189. *NZC*, 16 April 1898, 7.

190. *NZC*, 7 August 1897, 26.

191. *NZC*, 24 April 1897, 5.

and widespread ambivalence about prevailing norms of feminine behaviour in the late-nineteenth century. Discussion now turns, in Chapter 4, to examining the debates about women's cycling in New Zealand.

CHAPTER 4

THE DEBATES ABOUT WOMEN'S CYCLING

For nineteenth-century middle-class women, cycling presented two significant dilemmas which brought into sharp relief some key contemporary debates about femininity, and challenged in particular the prevailing gender order. In the first place, the conspicuous nature of cycling ran contrary to the social imperative for respectable women to be as unobtrusive as possible when in public space. How, then, could a woman cycle and maintain her respectability? Second, the physically active nature of cycling challenged prevailing beliefs about women's inherent physical and moral vulnerability. Should a respectable woman risk damaging her body, physically and morally, for such a capricious activity as cycling? These dilemmas elicited anxieties about feminine propriety, in particular the appearance and conduct of respectable women. Arguments over cycling were augmented by other related concerns such as dress reform, the physical education of girls, and women's health and well-being. What ultimately concerned critics of women's cycling, however, was the fear that women would become masculine in both their appearance and their conduct. The masculinisation of women was neatly embodied in the New Woman, whose stereotypical characteristics threatened the existing dominant ideology of middle-class femininity. In contrast to the conventional image of women (passive, subservient, and vulnerable), the New Woman heralded a new breed of women: physically and politically active, prominent in the public arena, and generally invincible (see figure 2, Chapter 1). This threatening transformation of middle-class femininity occurred in the context of widespread social change for all women throughout the nineteenth century, after decades of agitation for improved access to education, employment, political representation, and equal legal rights with men. In this chapter, I will show how female cyclists tried to reconcile their alternative views of femininity with conventional beliefs about middle-class femininity by trying to control the definition of the situation.

The debates which arose in response to women's cycling were voiced principally through newspapers, popular magazines, and cycling magazines; the debates examined here are, then, the constructs of nineteenth-century journalists and writers. The categories they developed to describe and interpret women's actions were necessarily artificial; journalists and writers tried to make tidy an untidy situation by dichotomously labelling women as *either* respectable *or* disreputable. Writers of etiquette manuals and society columns also perpetuated the social regulation of women by giving unilateral advice and instruction on matters of propriety. We

know, of course, that not all nineteenth-century respectable women behaved in uniform, or 'tidy', ways.¹ The ways they made use of public space, for example, would have depended on such factors as their personal temperament, social class, geographical location, and stage in the family life cycle.² Contemporary journalists, imbued with narrowly defined notions about middle-class respectability, expected *all* middle-class women to be respectable, and consequently reported their behaviour in dichotomous terms. As Judith Walkowitz points out, in nineteenth-century Western societies, women on the street could play only one of two roles: either endangered (respectable) or dangerous (disrespectable). Attracting the attention of others was a technique used by prostitutes to draw clients. A lady, on the other hand (see Chapter 2), played down her presence as much as possible by carefully adhering to the rules of appearance and conduct that signified taste and class.³ The fact that women's social transgressions were reported in the contemporary cycling literature shows that a link existed between cycling and improper behaviour, at least in the minds of writers prejudicial to cycling.⁴ Although individual women cycled for differing reasons and undertook diverse cycling activities, as a social group their cycling significantly challenged and rewrote the social conventions governing middle-class feminine propriety.

This chapter identifies and examines the debates about femininity which arose in response to women's cycling. I will argue that these debates were ultimately about competing definitions of middle-class femininity, and that they were articulated in two significant ways. The overarching debate focused on women's conduct and appearance, and incorporated a secondary concern, the effect of cycling on women's health.⁵ Following an examination of the dilemmas that women faced in terms of reconciling their cycling and their femininity, I will discuss the major debates in their broader context, where concerns were articulated around the conduct, the appearance and, ultimately, the masculinisation of women who cycled.

1. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966), cited in Mary Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 74-5.

2. Ryan, 1990, 85.

3. Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 21.

4. See, for example, the essays of Eliza Lynn Linton and Arabella Kenealy.

5. Because medical arguments about women and cycling have already been extensively examined in existing sports history research, they will be addressed in this chapter only where they inform the debates about femininity. See, for example, Kathleen McCrone, *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of English Women 1870-1914* (London: Routledge, 1988); Patricia Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors, and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994); and James Whorton, "The Hygiene of the Wheel: An Episode in Victorian Sanitary Science," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 52, no. 1 (1978): 61-88;

Feminine Dilemmas For Cycling Women

At a broad level, the major dilemma for women cycling in late-nineteenth century New Zealand was how to make others believe that they were respectable despite being highly conspicuous on their bicycles. In Goffman's terms (following W. I. Thomas), they sought to control the definition of the situation. When a woman rode by on a bicycle, many people found it difficult to reconcile the incongruence of what they saw and what they believed about respectable women. Drawing on previous knowledge of the kinds of women who deliberately made themselves conspicuous in public, *i.e.*, prostitutes, there would be a strong tendency to conclude that cycling women were far from respectable: not exactly prostitutes, perhaps, but possibly women of loose morals. Female morality was a concern for New Zealand cyclists. 'Theta' chose to reproduce an article in *The American Wheelman Annual* by journalist Edna I. Taylor, whose concluding remarks, for example, summarised her own feeling on the matter:

It is no more an unanswerable argument that the bicycle is productive of immorality among young girls because "it affords an easy means of escape from the paternal eye, and that girls seize such opportunities for impure purposes," than that the use of street cars and every other kind of vehicle, which most frequently is made to perform the same office for the same purpose, is productive of immorality. And whoever heard of the riding on street cars being condemned wholesale as immoral?⁶

That the opinions of Edna Taylor on American female morality were considered relevant to New Zealand cyclists is revealed not so much in the content of her article but in the comments 'Theta' made about submitting it to the previous issue of the *New Zealand Wheelman*:

I am sorry to see that autocrat the editor-in-chief did not put in the whole of the admirable article I took from *The American Wheelman Annual*, but the remainder of it appears in this issue. Being only a man, he cannot see what interest the article is to women. Therefore I suppose I must forgive him this time. I can assure him, however, that the article has been much appreciated by wheelwomen.⁷

Clearly the association between the bicycle and female immorality was not an unreasonable concern, given the broader anxieties about female morality at this time.⁸ In this social climate,

6. *New Zealand Wheelman*, 18 August 1897, 7.

7. *NZW*, 18 August 1897, 7.

8. Macdonald, Charlotte. "The 'Social Evil': Prostitution and the Passage of the Contagious Diseases Act (1869)," in *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand*, ed. Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald, and Margaret Tennant, (Wellington: Allen & Unwin / Port Nicholson Press, 1986), 13-34; Andr e Levesque, "Prescribers and Rebels: Attitudes to European Women's Sexuality in New Zealand, 1860-1916," *Ibid.*, 1-12; Jan Robinson, "Of Diverse Persons, Men, Women and Whores: Women and Crime in 19th Century Canterbury," (M.A. thesis, University of Canterbury, 1983). Macdonald and Levesque demonstrate that prostitution flourished in early colonial New Zealand and Robinson, that it continued to flourish in the late-nineteenth century. See *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand*, 1986, for other examples of social problems involving female immorality.

many people must have wondered what respectable woman would jeopardise her reputation just to ride a bicycle.

In the context of this struggle for pre-eminence in defining the situation, women cyclists had to consider the consequences of their behaviour. They knew they would be under intense scrutiny, and that they would probably have to run the gauntlet of jeers and insults. But, as Mary Ryan suggests, the anonymity afforded by the busy streets of a city may have given these cyclists a sense of freedom and boldness;⁹ few people might actually recognise who they were and insult them *personally*. By interpreting public criticism as a general assault on cycling (prejudice against all cyclists persisted throughout the decade), female cyclists could weather the unpleasantness by thinking of themselves as pioneers perhaps. 'Altiora', for example, referred to "martyr-like" women who took pleasure in steadfastly ignoring the insults of bystanders, demonstrating the actual harmlessness of this heckling, in an effort to encourage other women to take up cycling.¹⁰ Enthusiasm and determination alone were insufficient to cope with the unpleasant aspects of cycling, however; these women knew they had to develop defensive strategies to safeguard themselves, as well as to reinforce their own definition of the situation.

In a simplistic sense, minimising their obtrusiveness by cycling as gracefully as possible and wearing a suitable costume acted as an investment against invasive attention from observers on the street. At a deeper level, however, the connections between conspicuousness and respectability were always in tension. Until women started cycling, urban audiences understood how to read women's street visibility. Whichever way the audience read the situation, and whatever cyclists did to control the definition of the situation, it did not alter the fact that both the performers and the audience accepted that public space was, by definition, a masculine province. Even cycling journalists contesting conventional constructions of feminine ideology, sensed this:

No matter how insignificant a woman may be, nor how inconspicuous her garb, nor how desirous she is to escape notice, she is sure to attract attention upon the bicycle. Under other circumstances, such as walking, driving or riding, no one would dare to stare at or criticise her, and this, too, no matter how gay her gown nor how demonstrative her demeanour. But cycling seems to make her open to comment of the most open sort. The entire army of pedestrians, cabmen and small boys feel privileged to stare at her and pass remarks. Non-cycling women regard her with mingled amazement and amusement. *She is public property*, open to all kinds of comment and criticism. The only ones who don't join in the general criticism are the other wheelfolk. They, both men and women, skim past with an indifference that is most welcome to the poor wheelwoman.¹¹ (emphasis mine)

9. Ryan, 1990, 63.

10. *New Zealand Cyclist*, 12 June 1897, 5.

11. *NZC*, 21 August 1897, 5.

It is because people believed women were both interlopers in public space and were public property, that they felt they had the right to both comment on women's novel public behaviour and to communicate their opinions to women on bicycles.

To control the definition of the situation as much as possible, cyclists employed a number of protective strategies. Ignoring remarks, for example, was one way of maintaining their social distance from the audience; riding in groups was another way of diffusing the intensity felt by unwelcome attention.¹² A third strategy was to avoid certain streets at certain times; in this way cyclists might avoid placing themselves in vulnerable situations, although this only served to reduce the frequency of unpleasant encounters rather than terminate them altogether.

In all these strategies, cyclists contested conventional definitions of femininity, claiming for themselves a new construction of middle-class feminine identity, one that they insisted was perfectly reputable. The strength of public resistance to women's cycling, however, shows how threatening this development was, and the intensity of reactions was further exacerbated by the unashamed *boldness* of the cyclists' publicity. Mary Ryan makes exactly this point, that "[s]ocial space, especially the everyday uses of city streets, serves as a scaffolding upon which both gender distinctions and female identity are constructed."¹³ The fear that women were becoming un-sexed through cycling was underpinned by a fear that "gender distinctions might be corroded by the informal, everyday uses of public space by real men and women. The spontaneity, diversity, and volatility of life on the streets of the big city might not be so easily corralled into neat distinctions between the dualistic classifications of male and female."¹⁴ Fears of becoming un-sexed through cycling were possibly uppermost in the minds of the conservative cyclists in the Atalanta Cycling Club who objected to adopting rational dress, for example. To reconcile the act of cycling and respectability was the greatest accommodation they could make. Progressive cyclists, on the other hand, were more expansive in their views, and sought to achieve more than just the right to cycle in their bid for redefining middle-class respectability.

Nineteenth-century cyclists also had to reconcile their desire to ride the bicycle with the numerous, varied, and sometimes contradictory views on the effects of exercise on the female body. In the first place, they had to weigh the risks to mind and body. Learning to ride as an adult, as most women did during the 1890s, took greater courage than learning as a child. The

12. I mentioned this strategy in Chapter 3.

13. Ryan, 1990, 59.

14. *Ibid.*

sensation of riding was completely novel, and not all middle-class women would have had experience in horseback riding with which to make comparisons. The possibility of injury resulting from poor riding technique, as well as from traffic accidents, was also cause for serious reflection. The knowledge that they would probably be publicly ridiculed or harassed was another factor to consider, which did seem to deter less confident women, especially in the early 1890s. Finally, an absence of role models meant that there was inadequate information about ideal riding techniques, as well as how much riding was realistic or prudent for each individual. For all these reasons, the ladies' columns in the cycling magazines were an invaluable aid for women as they set about pursuing their desire to ride in the somewhat hostile and divided social climate of the time.

Making the Right Impressions

In order to understand how cyclists tried to create new impressions of middle-class feminine respectability, we need to recognise what people commonly understood as the contrasting conventional traits. We need also to bear in mind that women cyclists did not equally subscribe to the concerns of propriety, and that the conventional traits of femininity which I have identified are prescriptive rather than descriptive. As I indicated in Chapter 1, inspired by Australian historian Jill Julius Matthews, I generated an inventory of nineteenth-century feminine attributes using etiquette manuals and contemporary essays as source material. From those sources, I was able to identify nine key elements which seemed to signify the components of conventional nineteenth-century femininity: accommodating, beautiful, domesticated, emotional, good natured, inconspicuous, philanthropic, virtuous, and vulnerable (Figure 6). The attributes marked ¶ represent characteristics which female cyclists routinely transgressed according to the criticisms of the observing public. In a broader sense, the attributes marked § represent characteristics which modern progress threatened to alter, particularly as embodied in the New Woman. I have already identified being conspicuous as an issue pertinent to cycling, for example, but it cannot be attributed solely to cycling. Increasing urban employment and education opportunities¹⁵ meant that more women were moving around in urban public spaces to travel to work or educational institutions, and were therefore increasingly visible on various modes of transport or walking in the streets. Earlier, the development of department stores as well the identification of women as a specialised market had prompted an increase of women into the streets as they

15. Erik Olssen, "Women, Work and Family: 1880-1926," in *Women in New Zealand Society*, ed. Phillida Bunkle and Beryl Hughes (Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1980), 163.

shopped, window shopped, or met friends in tea rooms and eating places, so that by the time cycling became popular, there were already large numbers of women present in the public sphere.¹⁶ Cycling, however, increased women's conspicuousness because of the ways it challenged the stereotype of the respectable woman in the urban public context.

Accommodating	fit in with others [§] , submissive [§] , sacrificing [§] , non-competitive [§] , unambitious [§] , humble [§] , cautious [§] , appropriately dressed [§] , helpful, tactful, gentle, devoted
Beautiful	concerned with general appearance, pretty [¶] , have inner beauty, pleasant to look at [¶] , decorative [¶] , healthy
Domesticated	home loving, home keeper, nurturing, maternal, desire for marriage, useful
Emotional[§]	impatient, irrational [¶] , inconsistent [¶] , vain [¶] , intuitive, romantic [¶] , illogical [¶] , impulsive
Good natured	sympathetic, fair, kind, charming, tender, benign, generous, warm, affectionate, inoffensive [§] , unpretentious, patient, serene
Inconspicuous[§]	neat, compact, quiet, unobtrusive, modest, discreet, graceful, elegant, inactive
Philanthropic	applied practical social concern
Virtuous	good, just, prudent, temperate, fortitudinous, faithful, hopeful, charitable, pure, moral [§] , responsible [§]
Vulnerable[¶]	chaperoned [§] , accompanied [§] , needing protection, weak, dependent [§] , fragile, needing assistance [§]

Figure 6: Inventory of Conventional Nineteenth-Century Feminine Attributes

Nineteenth-century feminine propriety demanded that respectable women convey the right outward signs of femininity; the dilemma for cyclists was to calculate how much they could redefine situations within the broader confines of propriety and still ensure their audience

16. *Ibid*; Roberta Nicholls, "Élite Society in Victorian and Edwardian Wellington," in *The Making of Wellington, 1800-1914*, ed. David Hamer and Roberta Nicholls (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1990), 220; the Christchurch Young Women's Christian Association established a cafeteria from its foundation in 1883, where young women could have morning and afternoon tea and a place to rest. Clare Simpson, "The Social History of the Christchurch YWCA, 1883-1930" (M.A. thesis, University of Canterbury, 1984), 200; many other voluntary associations similarly focused on the needs of city women.

received the correct impression. Cyclists borrowed from contemporary practices as much as possible, minimising differences from the prevailing stereotype so that they could raise their credibility in the minds of their audience.

Issues of Appearance

A crucial factor assisting observers to identify whether or not a woman was respectable was to judge her outward appearance, the most immediate clue to a woman's breeding. Concern with the minutiae of apparel was paramount in conveying the correct impressions to an audience. As Helene Roberts argues, "Not only could clothing transform a person's appearance, it could influence the actions and attitudes of both the wearer and the viewer."¹⁷ Clothes expressed clear-cut gender differences and sexual identity. Figure 7 represents Roberts's argument of how clothing signals gender.

Dress code	Attribute	Gender
dark colours, no ornamentation	serious	masculine
light pastel colours, ribbons, lace, bows	frivolous	feminine
unrestrictive trousers, loose shirts	active	masculine
restrictive corsets, hoops, heels	inactive	feminine
broad shoulders, chests	strong	masculine
small waists, sloping shoulders, soft fabrics	delicate	feminine
unrestricted, sharp lines	aggressive	masculine
constricted, rounded lines	submissive	feminine

Figure 7: Gendered Messages in Victorian Dress¹⁸

Nineteenth-century audiences expected to see a respectable woman reflect the elements of beauty and inconspicuousness as noted in figure 6: being concerned with general appearances; enhancing features so that they were pleasant to look at, possibly pretty; women should possess inner beauty, be decorative, and reflect a healthy appearance. In both her clothing and manner,

17. Helene E. Roberts, "The Exquisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman," *Signs* 2, no. 3 (1977): 554. Contemporary literature alluding to the symbolism of dress was abundant at this time; information and advice was contained in etiquette manuals, numerous books on the subject, as well as expository essays and novels. The references in Roberts' article provide an excellent overview of this topic.

18. *Ibid.*, 555.

a woman should appear neat, compact, quiet, unobtrusive, modest, discreet, graceful, elegant and passive.

Ideally, nineteenth-century women dressed for each activity in which they engaged, necessitating frequent changes of costume in the course of a day. The etiquette of dressing for sport and recreation, for example, specified one dress for tennis, one for boating, one for golf, another for shopping, and yet another for visiting. When women took up cycling, they were compelled to find suitable costumes to wear; courage was needed to try some of the more innovative clothing designs, such as shortened skirts, bifurcated apparel, or convertible costumes. Whatever their final choice of cycling costume, however, the important point to note is that women were strongly urged to reflect upon their appearance.¹⁹ 'Altiora' put the case for careful attention to dress in the very first issue of the *New Zealand Cyclist*, in her article, "Wherewithal Shall She Be Clothed?"

We must dress for the bicycle To see some women a-wheel in the streets one would think they had met a bicycle by accident and mounted it, for an experiment merely. If they could only see themselves as others see them! . . . The question is not one of expense, because she who can spend £25 on a machine is perfectly well able to afford a dress also. It is purely a question of good or bad taste.²⁰

Women tried their hardest to maintain a perfect impression no matter what the circumstances, whether they were cycling at leisure in town, or touring the country over a long period of time. In other words, concern with appearance was entirely independent of the situation, as the following sentiment illustrates: "The aim of the well-dressed cycliste [*sic*] should be to look as fresh and nice when she is returning from a long ride as when she started."²¹

The ladies' pages of New Zealand cycling magazines dwelt at length on all aspects of appearance, detailing the minutiae with which women should be concerned. No aspect of dress was overlooked: fabrics, colours, style, skirt lengths, hats, shoes, gloves, underwear, accessories - all were exhaustively discussed and debated. Costumes were to be made of tweed or serge, in 'quiet' colours. A typical description of a suitable cycling costume which refers to colours and cloth indicated that:

Dark blue cloth, fine in quality, is popular with cyclists, and with this the Eton coat invariably looks well, showing a front of some light colour and a belt of soft white kid. The revers²² of white cloth are outlined in some instances with a narrow gold and black braid, which is continued round the coat. At the neck the new stock collar is worn. Concerning headgear, there is a distinct fancy for the canvas hat with befeater crown. It is new and smart, and withal light to the head. With a navy-coloured cloth gown a

19. *Otago Witness*, 6 August 1896, 37.

20. *NZC*, 15 May 1897, 5.

21. *OW*, 15 October 1896, 37.

22. The turned-back edge of the garment, revealing the under-surface.

red canvas is decidedly becoming, finished with a band and large rosette of black satin ribbon, the necessary height at the left side being given by a loop of ribbon or a bunch of quills.²³

Any clothing that flapped, such as capes, fur accessories, or voluminous skirts, were out of place on a bicycle. Hair was to be smooth or neat, and hats were to be small and compact; a sailor's hat was suitable, but not a sunbonnet, which was considered too conspicuous.²⁴

Of all the concerns about cycling costume, the ideal cycling skirt became the most consuming topic of conversation. If too long, skirts were liable to become entangled in the chain-wheel or spokes; accidents like this were numerous. A more generic and annoying problem was dealing with windy conditions. On windy days, not only did full skirts make for a more arduous ride and present significant wind resistance, but they were also likely to flutter up and expose the legs of the rider. One woman cycling on a windy day in a full skirt of lightweight material attracted a great deal of attention as she tried to stop her skirt flapping around her head. A male observer, reporting this incident in the *New Zealand Wheelman*, wryly commented:

No young woman need despair of attracting the attention of the horrid men if she can ride a bicycle and happens to possess a good wide skirt of some thin material. All she has to do is to select a windy day. And the exhibition, you see, costs nothing.²⁵

The popularity of women's cycling demanded of tailors and pattern makers new styles of dress which would allow for movement in the upper body and the legs, would appeal to the aesthetic senses by emphasising graceful action, and would also be safe to ride in. The *New Zealand Cyclist* suggested the following style as suitable:

A pretty style for a skirt for riding is one which fastens slightly at the side, towards the front, a row of buttons at either side, the upper part of the front width giving a nice finish. The top of the front width should not be too wide, as the narrower it is, and the closer the buttons are together, the more slim will appear the figure of the wearer. This skirt should have a single box-pleat at the back, so arranged that it forms an opening for the saddle, and the skirt falls gracefully on either side of the machine.²⁶

Shortened skirts eventually became acceptable towards the end of the decade, although initially they caused a stir since they exposed the formerly hidden ankle. If considered not too inoffensive, the revelation of the legs provoked humorous responses, such as poems or jokes. For example:

23. *NZC*, 1 May 1897, 5.

24. *NZC*, 15 January 1898, 9.

25. *NZC*, 17 September 1898, 19.

26. *NZC*, 1 May 1897, 5.

Mary had a little lamb;
 That time has passed away;
 No lamb can follow up the pace
 Our Mary sets to-day.
 For now she rides the air-shod wheel
 In skirts too short by half.
 No lambkin shares her airy flight
 But you can see her calf.²⁷

or:

A delicate query and answer:
 "How close to her ankles does Miss Thomson's new bicycle skirt come?"
 "A little above two feet."²⁸

But if considered in the worst light, the inevitability of ankle exposure was particularly problematic for the cyclist, since such exposure in the streets could be associated with the behaviour of prostitutes.²⁹ To counter this problem, gaiters were worn with boots to cover the amount of leg exposed by shortened skirts (or knickerbockers and bloomers if a bifurcated style was worn).³⁰

Bifurcated garments presented cyclists with another costume option which, although potentially *risqué*, was not necessarily so. Divided skirts, for example, were cleverly contrived to look like walking skirts when not on the bicycle, but were also comfortable to ride in since they were bifurcated. Another option was to adopt a convertible style, such as a skirt which could be gathered up with a series of ribbons running through hooks on the inside of the skirt (like a Roman blind), to expose bloomers underneath. When walking or in the house, the ribbons were simply loosened and the skirt allowed to fall to the ground.³¹ (See figure 8).

The issues of style and taste suggest that there was a fine line between wearing fashionable cycling clothes and those that would attract criticism. Wearing white shoes for cycling, for example, was considered inappropriate even though they were otherwise popular in the 1897 fashion season; their popularity made the feet look conspicuous, which was considered

27. *NZC*, 23 April 1898, 9.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *NZW*, 11 May 1897, 9; *NZC*, 15 October 1898, 9.

30. *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies' Journal*, 9 October 1897, 493. See discussion below about the romanticising, as opposed to vilification, of women's exposed legs.

31. *The Lady's Standard Magazine*, vol. XI, no. 2, 1894, in Nancy Villa Bryk, ed., *American Dress Pattern Catalogs, 1873-1909: Four Complete Reprints* (Michigan: Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, and New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 84; The New Zealand cycling magazines reported many kinds of convertible costumes, as well as suggestions for modifying garments when on cycle tours, to be able to feel comfortable going into guest houses and inns *e.g.*, one woman folded back the lapels of her jacket in a 'tasteful' way, added a silver belt, and some silk and lace to her front (*OW*, 3 November 1898, [37]); bifurcated clothing will be discussed more fully in connection with the masculinisation of women's appearance through rational dress.

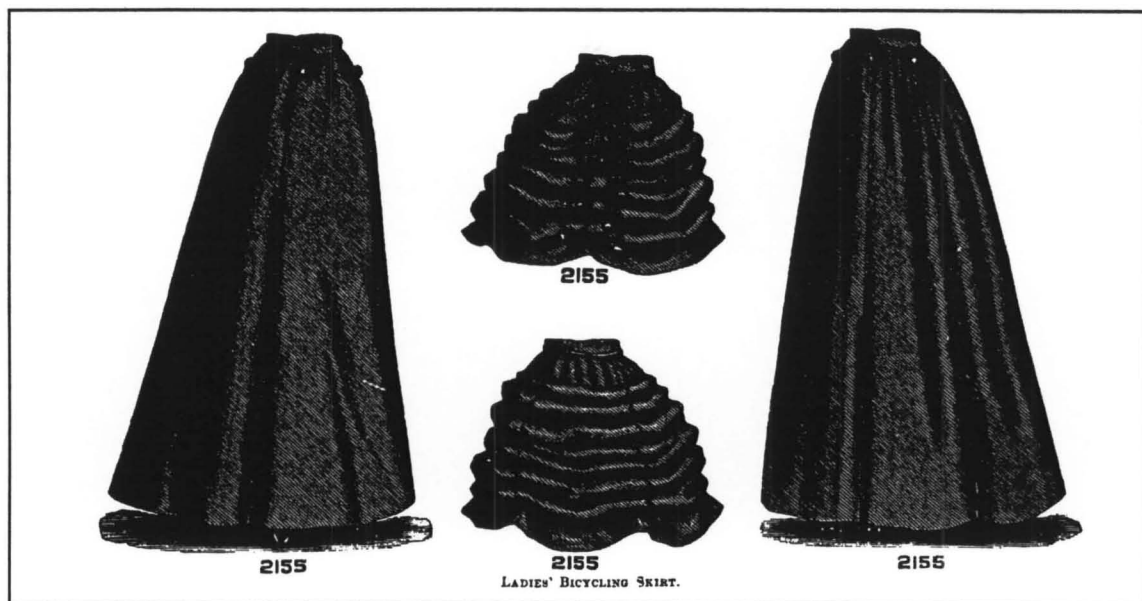


Figure 8: Ladies' Convertible Bicycling Skirt
[Source: Bryk, 1988, 84.]

undesirable "if a woman [on a bicycle] wishes to look well."³² It was usually a safe bet to imitate French cycling fashions, although bifurcated garments (which were popular in France) were only accepted for non-Frenchwomen if they restricted wearing them for cycling in France.³³ 'Altiora' summarised the essence of appropriate cycling dress as narrow sleeves, skirt, and a small hat. In her opinion, it was "impossible to be too compactly neat in appearance."³⁴

A final point to note in connection with managing appearances is the significance of developing a composed riding style. Instructions for riding emphasised the importance of graceful riding for women, with the arms kept close to the sides, an upright posture, and a smooth pedalling action. A quiet and dignified approach to riding was consistent with maintaining a passive public presence, which helped minimise the visibility of female cyclists.³⁵ Mindful of the potential for unwanted attention, the advice of 'Altiora' highlighted the need to be as inconspicuous as possible.

32. *NZC*, 21 August 1897, 5.

33. *NZW*, 22 October 1892, 7; 25 January 1896, 4.

34. *NZC*, 15 May 1897, 5.

35. Riding styles criticised as 'masculine' will be discussed below in connection with the masculinisation of women.

Issues of Conduct

Like her outward appearance, the conduct of a woman was an equally visible factor by which observers judged her respectability. How she behaved, where she went, by whom she was accompanied, were all features of conduct that determined how others responded to her. Audiences expected to see behavioural signs of refinement in a respectable woman. Such behavioural attributes included accommodating the wishes of others, aspiring to domestic concerns and responsibilities, being good natured despite being somewhat emotional, possessing a virtuous character, showing practical concern for those less fortunate, and accepting the need for moral and physical protection. In addition to these qualities, respectable women endeavoured to avoid attracting inappropriate attention by unobtrusive, modest and discreet conduct (see figure 6).

The bicycle demanded of middle-class women a new repertoire of behaviours with which to signal their respectability. As the *Otago Witness* phrased it,

The true wheelwoman retains all her womanly qualities whether she walks or cycles, whether she remains at home or rides through our streets. . . . So let all of us wheelwomen try to act dignified and womanly when awheel, as well as other times, so that this glorious sport will not be forbidden to women of the highest character.³⁶

In the early days of women's cycling, the etiquette of horse riding served cyclists reasonably well, guiding men and women about which side of each other to ride on, riding pace, acknowledgement of others whilst riding, *etc.* Once cycling became more popularly enjoyed, however, more specialised advice was offered and new prescriptions appeared in etiquette manuals from the mid-1890s. Riding gracefully at a moderate pace in an appropriate cycling costume in the right parts of town was what constituted respectable riding behaviour according to etiquette in manuals and in the cycling magazines.³⁷ Instructions addressed all aspects of riding, such as how to ride the bicycle, how to ride with companions, as well as how to behave in the street and how to cope with traffic. Since the bicycle became popular for transport as well as for recreation, new street behaviours represented a departure from horse riding, which in urban settings occurred at a walking pace, both for transport and recreational purposes. Furthermore, equestriennes rode side-saddle, whereas cyclists rode astride the bicycle. Bicycle riding thus presented new and unique challenges in re-writing the conventions of riding. Cycling

36. *OW*, 10 March 1898, 41.

37. *e.g.*, Maud C. Cooke, "Bicycle Etiquette," in *Social Etiquette or Manners and Customs of Polite Society* (Chicago: National Book Concern, 1896), 343-51. Excerpts about cycling etiquette from various British and North American etiquette manuals or society columns were regularly reproduced in the ladies' pages of the *New Zealand Wheelman* and the *New Zealand Cyclist*.

behaviour which exceeded the bounds of propriety was, however, strongly censured.³⁸ Riding instructions were as much utilitarian as anything else, for there was no precedent for cycling. Underlying the instructions for women was an emphasis on feminine discretion in how they should approach this new challenge:

The rider should hold herself upright when she stands with her foot on the pedal, and she would then find herself directly over the saddle as soon as she puts her weight on the pedal and takes the other foot from the ground. It is not a jump, but a light springing movement that is required, and the rider will find that she sinks naturally into the saddle. The second pedal should not be caught too hurriedly, and should never be looked at. It is a great mistake to accustom yourself to look down at your pedals, and if the pedal is not caught at the first revolution it does not matter in the least.³⁹

This kind of instruction, consisting of both practical as well as idealistic advice (*e.g.*, never to look down at the pedals, spring into the saddle rather than jump, *etc.*) was characteristic of the period. Right from the outset, no matter how difficult was the mastery of riding skills, the rider was to maintain a good posture, and move as gracefully and discreetly as she could.

More important than instructing women on how to ride their bicycles, the etiquette of cycling advised them on appropriate heterosocial behaviour in the context of cycling. This advice was essentially an extension of conduct regarded as proper in a variety of recreation or travel situations where women and men shared public space:

Now that ladies have taken so largely to the bicycle, the etiquette of the wheel is a matter which must be taken seriously in hand. In riding together the gentleman has, of course, to give the lady the left or near side of the road, but this must necessarily be subject to variations in the condition of the road, and, as far as traffic permits, she should be directed to the smoothest part. When single file is necessary the lady should be permitted to lead unless the way has, so to speak, to be cleared, as for instance, when cattle or sheep are encountered.⁴⁰

Both male and female riders were anxious to observe protocol. As cycling etiquette gradually evolved, discussions developed about the finer points of judgement that might be called for.⁴¹ Men were to attend to women as unobtrusively as possible and show consideration. Their instructions included moderating their pace to suit the woman's, consulting her about the route to be taken, as well as places to stop and the overall length of the ride. Some conscientious men must have persisted in keeping to the left to make room for oncoming traffic, but in doing so, forced their female companions into the gutter. They were advised to drop behind the woman and trust that her own cycling skills would suffice until the potential danger had passed. Men should allow women to take the lead if the pathway were not wide enough for them both, but

38. NZW, 18 October 1894, 11; NZC, 15 May 1897, 6.

39. OW, 3 September 1896, 37; NZGLJ, 25 July 1896, 108.

40. NZC, 12 June 1897, 6.

41. *e.g.*, NZC, 11 September 1897, 5.

ride on ahead if the road were rough or there were many sharp turns, choosing the best places for women to follow.⁴² The chivalry of males was appreciated for carrying women across streams or rivers, and for leading the way in the dark, as well as for their courtesy on the roads.⁴³

Women were also required to extend courtesies to men when riding in their company. A woman needed to be careful about the details of her dress, in particular making sure that nothing would fall apart or get caught in the bicycle; such hitches would cause a man to keep stopping while she sorted herself out. She should also strive to be as independent as possible, declining a man's help unless really needed. Rather than have her male companion push her bicycle over rough or difficult parts of the road, for example, a woman should endeavour to do this for herself, likewise, when encountering gates or hills. If she *always* expected him to do these things for her, she risked becoming a burden rather than a joy to her companion.

Genuinely needing assistance was one thing, but there was a limit to how much a woman could prey upon the chivalry of a man. Calculated displays of helplessness nevertheless could be considered germane since they gave men an opportunity to render assistance. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, 'Altiora' advised that even if she were able to mend a puncture, for example, a woman should try and get a man to do it for her if one were "within hailing distance," to avoid damaging her fingernails or soiling her gloves.⁴⁴ If a woman genuinely did need help, she should endeavour to help herself as much as possible before asking assistance, as this anecdote shows:

Before noon . . . a heavy nor'-wester sprang up and the question at once arose, "How are the ladies to get home?" One of the gentlemen of the party, an experienced rider . . . at once suggested a tow line, and proceeded to put his ideas into practice by procuring a piece of string. Now, there is a certain amount of humility, even with ladies, against being helped along in this way. It is an indisputable admission of physical weakness, which a wheelwoman prefers not to show; so for the first mile or so, no volunteers were forthcoming as "towers," but first one and then another had to succumb to the violence of the gale and the wily entreaties of the gentlemen, until we were all ultimately divided off into pairs, and I may say (between you and me) much to our relief."⁴⁵

Riding in traffic was potentially confusing and distressing, since the rules of the road in New Zealand were often not conscientiously observed in practice. For example, the chivalry of cabdrivers in allowing women to use their own side of the road could result in accidents. As women became more skilled cyclists, confusion often arose when drivers unnecessarily gave

42. NZC, 17 December 1898, 6.

43. NZW, 4 May 1897, 20; 17 April 1897, 5.

44. NZC, 16 April 1898, 7.

45. NZW, 19 December 1900, 5.

way, only to end up face-to-face on the same side of the road as a woman, the cyclist for her part staying strictly on her own side, not taking advantage of any chivalrous concessions. On the other hand, people prejudiced against cyclists took advantage of women's increasing confidence and continued to go out of their way to confront them.⁴⁶ In this context it is hardly surprising that women who rode in town traffic were construed as 'reckless,' no matter how carefully they rode.⁴⁷ The rules governing cycling etiquette that were spelled out in the *New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette* as late as 1899 illustrate this point: people carried away with the exhilaration of cycling "flagrantly disregard[ed] common courtesies and the rights of others."⁴⁸ Towards the end of the decade, cycling etiquette was probably more a matter of public safety for all road users rather than of gendered propriety.

Redefining and Communicating New Signals of Female Respectability

I have argued that women who rode bicycles were cognizant of the need to maintain outward signs of respectability, both in terms of their appearance and their conduct. As they adapted their clothes and behaviour for cycling, they struggled with the dilemma of striking the right balance between sensible adaptation and creative innovation, mindful of the inevitable public criticism of their actions. Reference to the British aristocracy played an important part in sanctioning women's cycling behaviour in the eyes of the disapproving public. Female aristocrats and high society individuals were clearly fashion leaders, setting the standards to which respectable women aspired; the same principle applied to recreational and social pursuits, as well as opinions on all kinds of things.⁴⁹ Both in Britain and New Zealand, once prominent members of society began to ride, women in general felt that permission had been granted for them also to ride. For example, Queen Victoria's decision to ride a tricycle and give her daughters bicycles was celebrated in the cycling literature by British and New Zealand cyclists alike.⁵⁰ In New Zealand, the daughters of the Governor, Lord Glasgow, and the wife of Prime Minister Richard Seddon, were widely admired as cyclists and their actions prompted others to follow suit.⁵¹ The fact that the actions of British high society were routinely reported in New Zealand cycling magazines and newspaper articles supports the argument that nineteenth-century New Zealand women were anxious to emulate high society protocol and aspired to emulate the

46. *OW*, 15 October 1896, 37.

47. *NZW*, 18 August 1897, 9.

48. *NZCTCG*, 1 January 1899, 83.

49. Veblen has cogently argued the case for emulation in his work, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*.

50. *NZW*, 8 June 1897, 5.

51. *NZW*, 19 October 1895, 7; 2 January 1897, 11; 8 June 1897, 5; *Canterbury Times*, 7 January 1897,

behaviour of their role models. Similarly, some members of high society in Britain, Europe and North America also endorsed rational dress.⁵² It seems likely that, once female members of the British, European and North American aristocracy had taken to riding, their participation was reported in New Zealand to reassure reluctant cyclists that cycling was not unladylike.⁵³

For the audience's part, not only were new codes of behaviour and appearance on bicycles to be fathomed, but also totally new ways of understanding women's role in society were called for. Perhaps if women had simply taken up cycling as a recreational pursuit, an end in itself like tennis or croquet, their new costumes and activities might be comprehended. But because the bicycle was also used as a vehicle for transport which could be used for an infinite number of possibilities, women's cycling persisted in pushing the boundaries of propriety and brought with it a new gamut of considerations to do with female independence and mobility which had hitherto not been witnessed by the public.

In Chapter 1, I outlined the problem of cycling women's presence in public: they presented a most ambiguous definition of a situation, neither falling neatly into the 'respectable' nor 'disrespectable' classification of 'female' so conveniently dichotomised in the nineteenth-century mindset. The independent mobility of cyclists raised genuine alarm for their physical, if not moral, safety; simply put, the bicycle could easily take women to unsavoury places where they might be endangered physically (*e.g.*, by being attacked), or morally (*e.g.*, by being seduced into imprudent conduct with intemperate company). According to one unnamed social reformer, cycling had by 1896 already "caused the ruin of thousands of young girls." Roadside refreshment houses were cited as a case in point: "The road inns and the free and easy manners that obtain among cyclists help along, she [the reformer] says, the Devil's work, and that from a glass of lemonade, it is but a step to a refreshing glass of beer, and that 'when one glass has been taken the descent is short and swift.'"⁵⁴

Cities, even more than the rural areas where road inns were located, represented a host of tempting places for young girls on bicycles to explore. The presence of women in cycling clubs thus might have assuaged such fears because club activities were highly structured. Moreover, club members, conscious of public prejudice towards cycling in general, tried to behave in exemplary fashion. Since not all women belonged to clubs, however, fears for their moral and physical safety were not unreasonable. Once bicycles had become a commonly

52. *OW*, 28 March 1895, 34; *NZW*, 24 July 1895, 13.

53. *NZGLJ*, 30 May 1896, 626; 6 June 1896, 659; *NZC*, 5 June 1897, 5; *OW*, 26 May 1898, [37].

54. *NZGLJ*, 28 November 1896, 110.

accepted means of transport, there were more opportunities for middle-class young women to venture into questionable places and to socialise with people outside their own circles.

Independent mobility was discussed by concerned observers in the context of the demise of chaperonage in Britain, which had already begun to wane in the early 1890s; chaperonage was considered virtually outmoded by the end of the decade.⁵⁵ It is doubtful that chaperonage ever really took hold in New Zealand society except, perhaps, amongst the most highly ranked families. Although it was discussed from time to time in the New Zealand cycling magazines, most references to chaperonage seemed to refer to British examples. The absence of formal chaperonage arrangements does not discount the fact that people held real fears for the safety of solitary female cyclists. Escape from parental or family supervision as well as increased opportunities for heterosexual socialising were still considered moral issues in New Zealand. People suspicious of cycling regarded it as affording opportunities for "impure purposes," and may well have lamented the absence of chaperonage in New Zealand.⁵⁶

The increasing incidents of young women travelling unaccompanied may also signify that women were not considered as vulnerable in the colony. New Zealand women proved they were capable of undertaking all kinds of cycling trips, emerging unscathed despite the very real dangers some of them encountered. Women sometimes told of deflecting the advances of strange men when out in the countryside, or of holding their own when entering public houses looking for meals or accommodation, for example. Cycling women defended their independent mobility by justifying that it was a sign of the times, of modern progress, when scores of men and women were moving into the cities. In this way, women's cycling was just one example of how women were more and more staking a legitimate claim on the urban landscape. The independence of women, rural migration to the cities, the mixing of strangers in the streets: these were some of the inevitable consequences of a modernising society.

"Masculinisation" of Women

Underlying the criticism of women's behaviour and appearance was the longstanding fear that through cycling, women would lose their femininity and become increasingly masculine.⁵⁷

55. Mrs Humphry, *Manners for Girls* (London and Melbourne: Ward, Lock and Co., [1901], 31-2; *Manners and Rules of Good Society or Solecisms to be Avoided*, 31st ed. (London: Frederick Warrie and Co., 1910), 205.

56. *NZW*, 18 August 1897, 7.

57. It is important to note that the argument that cycling hastened the demise of corsets and unsafe clothing, and urged the adoption of shorter, narrower skirts and bifurcated costumes can only realistically
(continued...)

From the outset, the issue of rational dress for cycling highlighted this concern about diminishing femininity,⁵⁸ and is the focus of the ensuing discussion about the masculinisation of women's appearance. In addition, rational dress, from its first flourish in the United States in the 1850s, symbolised the broader issue of social progress for women, as well as a challenge to the whims of fashion. Rational designs allowed women to move more freely, unencumbered by trailing skirts and tight corsets. For some women, their new-found physical freedom was best experienced in active sports pursuits, but for others, masculinised attire such as bifurcated costumes were worn to ape in blatant fashion the lifestyles and perceived privileges of manhood, and included indulging in smoking, drinking, and lounging, as well as socialising in public houses. To wear a bifurcated cycling costume was radical enough, but to behave like a man when on a bicycle (*e.g.*, by reckless riding, or entering bicycle races) built upon the fear that rational dress necessarily signalled female degradation. Although only a minority of cyclists chose to wear bifurcated costumes, this preference signalled to the observers a desire by women, in general, to engage in a much broader range of social roles.

Issues About Manly Appearances

Women who wore the most pronounced bifurcated garments became the focus of the most caustic criticism. Bloomers and knickerbockers, in particular, represented the closest approximation to male trousers. Such bifurcated clothing was considered, in the first place, unattractive and ugly, no matter how much it was embellished with feminine accessories such as lace or ribbons. More sinister was the association between bifurcation and immorality. Since bifurcated costumes drew attention to the legs, as Kylie Winkworth argues, the focus of women

57(...continued)

be applied to cyclists, and not necessarily to all women's sartorial preferences. As Valerie Steele argues, "Fashion evolves gradually, and not in a series of jerky responses to external stimuli." Rational explanations for changes in dress must be confined to the context of cycling, in this case, and the temptation to widely extrapolate their influence must be seen as too simplistic. The assertion by both Stephen Kern and Helene Roberts that, in the 1890s the bicycle forced women out of the bustle, is simply untrue, argues Steele. I would argue that it does hold true, but only for women who wished to cycle. For non-cycling women, the fashionable bustle may not have been any more inconvenient as any other transitory fashion trend. Note, however, that the bustle was also incompatible with horse riding (a comparable activity to cycling since it could be pursued as a recreational activity as well as act as a mode of transport in public) and other active sports, for which specialised costumes were worn. Adopting a suitable cycling costume it could be argued, was both a fashion statement, in rejection of the bustle, and a practice consistent with specialty sports clothing. Valerie Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 96.

58. "Rational dress" in this context means bifurcated costumes such as knickerbockers and bloomers, but not divided skirts which were not obviously bifurcated, the front looking like a skirt but the back being divided.

cycling fell upon "the legs going up and down or round . . . [working] in a highly conspicuous manner to power the machine."⁵⁹ In the context of a society accustomed to only ever seeing respectable women dressed in ground length skirts or, as Winkworth puts it, denying the existence of women's legs, it is not surprising that "the bicycle posed a serious challenge to the conventions and controls of fashionable dress and to the way it constructed the woman."⁶⁰ Finally, people also worried that women might be mistaken for men.⁶¹

Before each of these contentions is discussed (below), the influence of the rational dress movement in New Zealand needs to be described, to show what motivated women to risk the consequences of wearing 'masculine' cycling costumes. In 1893, a booklet appeared in Christchurch, explaining and advocating dress reform for women in New Zealand.⁶² *Notes On Dress Reform and What it Implies* detailed the types of dress reform that had developed since the idea was first promulgated in the 1850s.⁶³ In mid-1894, the New Zealand Rational Dress

59. Kylie Winkworth, "Women and the Bicycle: Fast, Loose and Liberated," *Australian Journal of Art* 8 (1989): 100.

60. *Ibid.*

61. Much mileage was gained by satirists such as *Punch* magazine, which speculated about what might be both gained and lost in the adoption of bloomers and knickerbockers (Adburgham, 1961). Women could win an advantage by this gender confusion, for example, by practising male customs such as smoking in the street; or they might lose their feminine privileges such as passing first through doorways, or would no longer be able to charm their way out of dilemmas, such as minor skirmishes with the law.

62. Walker, Kate, and J. R. Wilkinson. *Notes on Dress Reform and What It Implies*. Christchurch: Simpson and Williams, 1893. Kate Walker and her fiancé John Wilkinson were both ardent dress reformers and keen cyclists. In addition to the arguments for dress reform, the booklet included extracts from *The Arena*, citing the opinions of both American and British reformers such as Amelia Bloomer, Elizabeth Miller, Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Harriet Martineau, Frances Power Cobbe, Mrs E.M. King (an early member of the Cyclists Touring Club and Secretary of the Rational Dress Society), Frances Russell, and Viscountess Harberton. The issue of dress reform was widely debated in the local press in such publications as the *Auckland Weekly News*, the *New Zealand Mail*, the *Otago Witness*, the *Southern Queen*, *Daybreak*, the *White Ribbon*, and the *Christchurch Press*.

63. The origins of the rational dress movement are frequently attributed to American temperance activist Mrs Amelia Bloomer who, in 1851, wore a pair of Turkish trousers with a skirt reaching four to five inches below her knees. Mrs Bloomer published the design in her temperance magazine *The Lily*, in which the dress question was at that time under discussion. She and other prominent American feminists such as Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Harriet Martineau and Frances Willard, considered dress reform as part of a wider issue, women's emancipation. Women such as these wore rational costumes for some years, and organised a Dress Reform Association in 1856. Although they found the costume more comfortable to move about in, they constantly attracted hostility and unpleasantness, and reverted back to their former style of dress in order to diminish prejudice against, and to strengthen their influential work for, female suffrage.

Some years later, bloomers re-surfaced with the formation of The Rational Dress Society in 1881, founded by Viscountess Harberton (Florence Pomeroy), who became the official voice of the rational dress movement in England. Based in London, the aims of the Society were promoted through drawing-room meetings, advertisements, pamphlets, leaflets, and by issuing clothing patterns which met with the approval of the Committee. Seven years later, in 1888, the Rational Dress Society published its own gazette. Issued quarterly, each edition contained an editorial, a correspondence section, and articles featuring rational costumes, the ill-effects of tight lacing, and long or heavy dresses, and more esoteric writing on health,

(continued...)

Association was established to help link together the widespread and growing interest in dress reform in the country.⁶⁴ From its early origins in the 1850s in the United States through to its development in New Zealand, the dress reform movement advocated garments that eased women's physical movement, that minimised the ill effects on women's health, and that appealed the aesthetic senses. In addition to these incentives, there was a growing concern about the number of accidents, sometimes fatal, attributable to clothing. The broad aims of rational dress societies promoted "the adoption, according to individual taste and convenience, of a style of dress based upon considerations of health, comfort, and beauty, and to deprecate constant changes of fashion that cannot be recommended on any of these grounds."⁶⁵ Bifurcated garments were promoted by Rational Dress Societies as just one sensible clothing option amongst a variety of dress reforms.⁶⁶ Of the several styles of bifurcation that women could wear, opponents singled out for criticism those which most closely resembled masculine attire, *i.e.*, knickerbockers and bloomers.

The bicycle came to play a central role in advocating the concerns of the rational dress movement, which strongly recommended bifurcated garments as eminently suited to physically active women.⁶⁷ For cyclists, bifurcated clothing allowed all the limbs a greater range of free movement and addressed concerns about excessive drapery becoming entangled in the machine.

Because of its high visibility in public, the bicycle acted as a moving advertisement in which all the advantages of rational dress, including bifurcation, were most clearly and readily portrayed.

63(...continued)

fitness and beauty. By the 1890s, cycling and dress had become a regular topic for discussion in the gazette.

64. A committee was formed, headed by Alice Burn as President, with Kate Wilkinson as Vice-President, Miss Meredith as Secretary and Mrs Ingram as Treasurer. There were four other committee members. (*OW*, 17 May 1894, 27; *NZW*, 5 June 1895, 5). See Jane Malthus, 1989, for an excellent discussion of dress reform in New Zealand. According to Malthus, the official voice of dress reform as a movement in New Zealand seemed to have been the Women's Christian Temperance Union's Department of Hygiene, which addressed matters of women's health, until the formation of the New Zealand Rational Dress Association. Unfortunately, it is not known what the activities of this association were, nor what was its fate (Malthus, 1989, 44).

65. F. W. Harberton, *Reasons For Reform in Dress* (London: Hutchings and Crowsley, [1885]), 2; *Rational Dress Society's Gazette* no. 1 [April 1888], 1.

66. Bifurcated styles included divided skirts that reached the ground and looked like skirts when the wearer was stationary; bloomers, voluminous trousers, gathered at their hem and which varied in length from just below the knee, to the ankle; knickerbockers, which were usually knee length and more streamline, using less material than bloomers; culottes, a mid-calf length divided skirt.

67. The numbers of physically active women were rapidly swelling through increased sporting opportunities and the introduction of physical education into girls' schools. Mountain climbing, horse riding (cross-saddle), athletics, were among the many activities which would be benefitted by bifurcated costumes, reformers argued. See Malthus, 1989, 41-2, for a discussion of dress reform with reference to women's sport.

I have already made the point that for women who decided to cycle in rational dress, particularly a distinctly bifurcated costume, it was imperative to consider the consequences of their choice. The most immediate concern was the rude staring and the ridicule from people on the streets.⁶⁸ The most straightforward strategy seemed to be to ignore such behaviour. By openly staring and making comments, hecklers breached the bounds of what Goffman termed 'civil inattention', the act of subtly acknowledging but not intruding on the presence of others; polite society would *notice* but not *comment* on inappropriate behaviour, and if comments were made, they would especially not be made directly to the protagonist.⁶⁹ The only proper option open to women on the receiving end of this rude public behaviour was to maintain what Goffman termed 'dramaturgical discipline', by ignoring the inappropriate attention and suppressing any emotional response to the situation.⁷⁰ In this way, the cyclist could give the impression of maintaining *her own definition* of the situation, *viz.*, that despite her unusual appearance, she was nevertheless a respectable lady who expected to be treated as such.

The prejudice against knickerbockers or bloomers was sometimes incorporated into institutional practices. One way to express opposition to rational dress was by denying wearers access to public places. Some proprietors of public accommodation houses, for example, chose to refuse entry to rationally dressed women, something which happened to the Misses Mitchell of Gore who were turned away from a hotel in Central Otago on account of their rational dress.⁷¹ As I showed in Chapter 3, even women's cycling clubs discriminated against wearers of rational dress, by either prohibiting or restricting its use in association with club activities.

68. *NZW*, 11 July 1895, 5; 7 September 1895, 5.

69. As Goffman puts it, when one party ". . . gives to another enough visual notice to demonstrate that one appreciates that the other is present (and that one admits openly to having seen him), while at the next moment withdrawing one's attention from him so as to express that he does not constitute a target of special curiosity or design." Erving Goffman, *Behaviour in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings* (New York: The Free Press; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1963), 84.

70. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 210 *ff.*

71. *NZW*, 11 April 1896, 4. The most famous case where a woman was denied entry to such a public place was that of Lady Harborton, who took legal action against the landlady of an English inn. Viscountess Harborton, president of the Women's Rational Dress Association, entered the Hautboy Inn at Ockham, Surrey, and asked for lunch. The landlady refused to allow her to enter the coffee-room because Lady Harborton was wearing bloomers, but offered to serve her in the bar parlour, where only men usually ate. The Council of the Cyclists' Touring Club took the case to court, and the landlady was prosecuted for a misdemeanour, but was acquitted at a subsequent trial. *NZCTCG*, 1 June 1899, 146; *NZGLJ*, 18 March 1899, 339. Women wearing rational dress were denied access to other public spaces. For example, Alice Burn, who was studying for her degree in medicine at Canterbury College, Christchurch, was refused admission to her university lectures if she wore rational dress (*NZW*, 24 July 1895, 6). Numerous incidents from other countries were reported in New Zealand cycling literature, indicating that the issue was of great interest to the New Zealand readership. In France, for example, the Beadle at Rouen refused to admit rationally dressed women to the cathedral (*NZW*, 22 February 1899, 5). See also *NZCTCG*, 1 March 1899, 114; *OW*, 23 March 1899, 41.

It was alleged by some people that knickerbockers and bloomers made women look like men, which was thought to be most unbecoming.⁷² The ways *Punch* portrayed women's cycling captured public opinion, for example, when jokes emphasising the masculinity of bifurcated garments were published in the *New Zealand Wheelman*:

She: "Do you think the new cycling costume for ladies is becoming?"

He: "Yes, I think it is *becoming* masculine!"⁷³

Some feared that the unwomanly appearance of knickerbockers might discourage potential female cyclists from taking up the activity, a concern expressed in the early 1890s when female cyclists were few in number. Letters to newspapers often expressed this worry. For example:

CYCLING DRESS

SIR - I have read in today's paper "Uniform's" letter on cycling dress, and I cannot let it pass without a reply, even although I myself have not read "Aroaleat's" letter. "Uniform" supposes, because "Aroaleat" has merely mentioned cap and tunic, that some form of knickerbockers represents his idea of rational dress. I hope "Uniform's" surmise is correct, for since both men and women are two-legged there can be only one rational dress for both. I do not know whether "Uniform's" letter is written by a lady or by a gentleman; if by a gentleman, let him wear a woman's skirt for a week for bicycling or other exercises before he ventures to criticise "Aroaleat's" rational dress. If "Uniform" be a lady I should advise her, for the same reason, to bicycle a few times or play tennis in knickerbockers, so that she may taste the delights of being clad in rational dress.

"Uniform" seems confident that he knows the opinions of most of the ladies of the Club, but, as I also have had opportunities of ascertaining them, I may say that even if the ladies of the Club do fix cap, tunic and skirt, they will only include the latter impediment because they fear too decided public attention. "Uniform" thinks that no lady would like to wear a knickerbocker costume, but from watching lady riders in skirts and in knickers, I can safely say that the lady in knickers and tunic, or knickers, tunic and gaiters, presents a much finer appearance than the lady in a skirt, which cannot hide her figure, and yet does not fit gracefully when on a bicycle.

After all, what need is there for much discussion on the matter. A meeting in Sydney was lately called for the purpose of establishing a ladies' knickerbocker bicycling club, and it is well known that many ladies in the older countries now bicycle in knickerbocker costume. Since the present Ladies' Cycling Club is, I suppose, the pioneer one of this colony, why should it be behind the spirit of the times with regard to women? Besides, ought the Club to start with such ungenerous principles that in a Club run the more advanced and braver members may not be represented equally with those who still wish not to offend a supposed, public prejudice. Just what amount of public prejudice there is against knickerbockers no one can quite ascertain, but I am sure that anyone seeing a lady bicycling in skirts must feel how much more comfortable and graceful she would be if clad in gymnasium or other knickerbocker costume. I am at present learning to bicycle on a lady's machine, and have for my companion a young boy, who is using the same bicycle. The contrast in the utility of our different dress is

72. NZW, 22 May 1894, 10. A London reporter attending a demonstration of 'Rational Woman' proclaimed that "masculinity, rather than emancipated womanhood, was stamped on the majority of them" NZC, 30 October 1897, 14.

73. NZW, 11 July 1895, 11.

shown very strongly, especially in securing the left pedal and in mounting. So I have decided to adopt knickerbockers for the remainder of my practising.

I should like to know what "Uniform's" definition of a lady is, as it seems to me he would by it shut out any woman who has given serious study to the question of rational dress, and has found its adoption advisable. - Yours, &c.,

ZEALANDIA.⁷⁴

The sight of women in rational dress upon a bicycle was unusual, and the combination of the two could only suggest that the conspicuousness of cycling would be intensified if rational dress were worn by riders. Others feared that an unwomanly appearance might jeopardise the chances of single women in attracting husbands.⁷⁵ Cyclist 'Twenty-two' wrote to the *New Zealand Wheelman* to express her distaste at rational dress, agreeing with the popular sentiment that such attire would make a woman more masculine (even if only used when exercising), and ruin her chances of attracting a husband:

Our sex will indeed lose its influence over the opposite one by this new procedure, and as I have myself no particular desire to pass my life as an old maid, I hope to see the movement nipped in the bud, and so, I know full well, do many of my lady friends.⁷⁶

In response to the criticism that rational dress was ugly, dress reform cyclists argued that it was a matter of priority, appealing to the safety and comfort of the costume as opposed to the attractive features of clothing which was potentially lethal. If aesthetics were a concern, rational costume need not be drab and unattractive, argued its proponents, as they demonstrated with their multifarious designs. Examples of bifurcated cycling costumes worn by the most socially prominent women and fashion leaders from Britain, North America, and France were cited endlessly in the sanctioning and promotion of rational dress for cyclists. Some also argued that if men had to wear skirts, they would soon change their minds about women wearing them and, instead, support bifurcated costumes.⁷⁷ Contrary to fears of diminishing matrimonial prospects, many men appeared in favour of rational cycling costumes, agreeing that it was a much more sensible design than a dress.⁷⁸

A second set of criticisms centred around the belief that bifurcated costumes were closely associated with immorality, either by their basic immodesty, or by their association with sexual licentiousness. The criticism of immodesty applied as much to shortened skirts, the mildest form of rational dress, as it did to the radical bifurcated costumes, since both kinds of

74. *Press*, 29 August 1892, 6. See also *Press*, 25 August 1892, 2; *Lyttelton Times*, 30 August 1892, 3; 31 August 1892, 3; 3 September 1892, 3.

75. *NZW*, 11 February 1893, 11; 25 February 1893, 12; 25 August 1894, 12.

76. *NZW*, 25 February 1893, 12.

77. An Englishman was reported to having personally tested the skirt, and had found it extremely uncomfortable to wear. *NZC*, 21 May 1898, 7.

78. For example, *NZW*, 25 February 1893, 12; *NZGLJ*, 14 May, 1898, 609.

rational dress exposed the female ankle and calf.⁷⁹ Conscious of their immodest attire, rationally clad female cyclists at first adopted gaiters to cover their lower limbs. This did not alter the fact, however, that for those in bifurcated costumes, the legs were still outlined for all to observe, accentuated by the physical action of pedalling, and making the public "witness to the physicality of women's bodies."⁸⁰ Offended viewers argued that activities which required such immodest clothing of the female body were best practised in private.⁸¹

Another criticism of the immodesty of knickerbockers for cycling was that this design resembled female underwear. Their adaptation for outer-wear seemed to many as if women were parading the streets in their underclothing. By all means women should loosen corsets, wear better fitting shoes, and wear knickerbocker underwear, one Society journalist conceded, but cyclists should still wear skirts on the outside.⁸²

In response to these accusations of immodesty, some male supporters rationalised that, on the contrary, rational costumes achieved modesty exactly, and pointed out the inherent hypocrisy of other women's clothing, such as for evening wear:

The chief characteristic of a refined, civilised woman is her modesty; yet that same woman unblushingly and openly arrays herself in costumes which she, were she not the inheritor of centuries of prejudice, would pronounce the most indecent, inconvenient and unbecoming costume that it is possible for the human intellect to conceive.⁸³

This argument was by no means novel. As early as 1869, the official doctor of the Véloce-Club de Rouen, France, M. Paracèse Bellencontre, contrasted the sartorial requirements of riding the velocipede with dancing. He argued that, whereas in dancing the female is imprisoned in satin and flowers, constricting her respiratory system in the confines of a polluted ballroom (wick-burning chandeliers), the velocipede, by contrast, "would never encourage our mothers, sisters and daughters to wear those scanty dresses of flimsy transparent material . . . designed to entice the male dancing partner looking down."⁸⁴

Cycling magazines assisted audiences in re-framing their criticisms of immodesty by reinterpreting rational dress as a component of romantic heterosexual discourse rather than as a symbol of sexual licence. That is, once people could see that the bicycle had a role to play in rituals of courtship and romance, providing a safe and optimistic contrast to their

79. Long skirts, notes Kylie Winkworth, are essentially a "mask for the legs," hiding their existence to the observer. Winkworth, 1989, 98.

80. *Ibid.*, 105.

81. *Ibid.*, 106.

82. *NZGLJ*, 24 March 1894, 267.

83. *NZW*, 11 July 1895, 5.

84. Bellencontre, 1869, cited in James McGurn, *On Your Bicycle: An Illustrated History of Cycling* (London: John Murray, 1987), 40.

apprehensions about its association with sexual danger, they were willing to consider the idiosyncrasies of women's cycling in a much more positive light. Penny Russell identified in Australian cycling journals the framing of male heterosexual desire (aimed at women's bodies) and women's desire (aimed towards matrimony) within the discourse of romance: "The recasting of the whole cycling experience in terms of contained heterosexual desire worked to eliminate almost all the challenge and anxiety associated with the female cyclist."⁸⁵ As a result, a whole new romantic discourse grew up around cycling, incorporating the bicycle into romantic songs (e.g., "Daisy, Daisy"), verse, novels, and images.⁸⁶ Romance shifted the emphasis from the legs "as elements of the bifurcated, active, empowered body and placed it instead on the shapely calves."⁸⁷ Before long, low-heeled shoes and black silk stockings eventually replaced boots and gaiters, the point now being to display the legs and ankles while cycling. New Zealand cycling journals reflected exactly the same treatment of heterosocial relations. In this way, women's bodies were able once again to become the customarily passive objects of male desire, a role mutually understood by both women and men. The potential for courtship and matrimony as a result of heterosocial encounters through cycling was most reassuring, for marriage represented a respectable conclusion to what was potentially a morally dangerous situation. As I will show in Chapter 5, the romantic discourse supplied one medium through which cyclists acquired a respectable social front.

The links between rational dress and sexual licentiousness centred around the styles of clothing worn in public by women of dubious character. In the first place, there was an association between bifurcated costumes and the theatre, where bifurcation was routinely used. According to Tiffany Urwin, cross-dressing was ubiquitous in Victorian theatre, and hence was ripe for parody and ridicule in both the theatre and the press.⁸⁸ Although theatrical performances were considerably more respectable by the 1890s than they had previously been, there was still a remnant of disrepute associated with performers and audiences; prostitutes often acted in vaudeville performances, and courtesans frequently acted as companions to male theatre

85. Penny Russell, "Recycling Femininity: Old Ladies and New Women," *Australian Cultural History* 13, (1994): 46.

86. See, for example, Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky, 1990); James Starrs, *The Noiseless Tenor: The Bicycle in Literature* (New Jersey: Cornwall Books, 1982); Adburgham, 1961; Jack Rennert, *100 Years of Bicycle Posters* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973); Jeanne MacKenzie, *Cycling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

87. Russell, 1994, 47.

88. Tiffany Urwin, "Women in Breeches: Bloomerism, Emancipation, and Sexual Liberty in 1851," Proceedings. (Auckland: Australasian Victorian Studies Association Conference, February 1993), 188.

goers. By both direct and indirect association, bifurcation and the theatre represented an unsavoury alliance.⁸⁹

Bifurcation figured prominently in the nineteenth-century world of prostitution and pornography, and thereby formed a direct association with immorality. Images of alluring young women in knickerbocker underwear were featured in a host of pornographic material in the form of postcards, stereoscopes, nickelodeons, early moving pictures, and underground magazines.⁹⁰ Prostitutes hitched up their clothes to expose both their legs and their knickerbockers to attract custom. As outer wear, knickerbockers had become the 'uniform' of fashionable French prostitutes, or *cocottes*, because of their success in attracting the attention of men.⁹¹ Partially for this reason, divided costumes had become unpopular in France by 1898.⁹²

The associations between bifurcated cycling costumes and immorality were strengthened by the visual image of a woman astride a bicycle. Bifurcation forced the audience to acknowledge that women possessed legs and to acknowledge that there was something between women's legs apart from the machine itself. Penny Russell suggests that the

forked body astride a modern machine could be represented as an essentially sexual image. . . . if women publicly acknowledged that they 'divided' in the middle - and crucially, at the genitals - they could not expect to be looked at with pure or innocent eyes. The display of legs was interpreted at one level as an open acknowledgement of sexuality . . . [t]he image of a woman *astride* a bicycle could not be reconciled with respectable femininity.⁹³

Distinctly bifurcated costumes, in their drawing of the eye up the leg to the groin, were thus problematic for female cyclists in precisely the opposite way in which they were regarded as an artifice for prostitution.

Another aspect to the concern about women riding astride was voiced by the medical profession, which made explicit the popular fear that bicycle riding might encourage covert female masturbation. The primary concern lay with the saddle design, which medical authorities discussed at length because of the discomfort and injury some women experienced with

89. Peter Bailey, "Rational Recreation and the Entertainment Industry: The Case of the Victorian Music Halls," in *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1884* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul / Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 159 ff.

90. Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-nineteenth Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966); Ronald Pearsall, "Pornography," in *The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 447-98.

91. *NZW*, 15 February 1899, 5.

92. They also lost favour because only about 10% of knickerbocker costumes were actually attractive, a major consideration for the fashion-conscious Frenchwoman. *NZC*, 1 January 1898, 22; *NZGLJ*, 13 August 1898, 204; 1 April 1899, 402.

93. Russell, 1994, 35-6.

uncomfortable saddles. According to both James Whorton and Patricia Vertinsky, it was the alarmists who persisted with the notion that cycling was a disguised form of masturbation.⁹⁴ Most doctors seemed to agree with Dr. E. B. Turner, a supporter of cycling for women, that cycling was most unlikely to lead to the practice of masturbation; the ride was too rough and the weight of the body exerted too much pressure on the saddle for any sexual enjoyment to be derived.⁹⁵ Penny Russell has noted that this issue was not discussed much in Australia; the same is true of New Zealand, where in the cycling magazines, only the comfort and injury factors relating to women's saddles were discussed, and then only in very broad terms. There is, however, an undercurrent of moral concern present in these magazines which is explicit only in medical literature such as the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*.

In the face of such strong sexual imagery brought about by the use and exploitation of the bifurcated costume, the challenge for middle-class cyclists in rational dress was to secure acceptance and respect for their redefinition of feminine respectability. The health and safety features of the costume for cycling were persistently emphasised in conjunction with the conviction that the exemplary behaviour of respectable women cyclists would unambiguously distinguish them from immoral women. Supporters of rational dress also countered charges of immorality with that very same condemnation of fashionable trends. According to Valerie Steele, some Victorians perceived that fashions were set by immoral women rather than by the aristocracy. Since the 1860s, concern was expressed that young respectable girls were imitating the dress, manners and appearance of the *demi-monde*, and that lines of respectability were becoming blurred.⁹⁶ Steele argues that "to a limited extent, the criticism of fashions was only the projection of deeper anxieties about changing life-styles (including sexual behaviour)."⁹⁷ Famous courtesans and members of theatrical professions were among fashion leaders, partly because it was important for them to look attractive, and partly because they were used to being less constrained about their conspicuousness. "If a woman wanted to look fashionable, she ran the risk of looking immodest."⁹⁸ The dilemma for ordinary respectable women was to follow

94. Whorton, 1978, 77-8; Vertinsky, 1990⁴, 79.

95. Edward B. Turner, "A Report on Cycling in Health and Disease," *British Medical Journal*, 6 June 1896, 1399. Penny Russell notes that this issue was not discussed much in Australia; the same is true of New Zealand. A search of all issues of the *New Zealand Medical Journal* up to 1900 yielded nothing on this topic.

96. Mrs Lynn Linton, a journalist and novelist wrote a now-famous article "The Girl of the Period," in which she vigorously attacked the pernicious effects of modern dress on moral character (Mrs Elizabeth Lynn Linton, "The Girl of the Period," *Saturday Review*, 14 March 1868, 339-40, cited in Steele, 128). Thirty years later, she was still actively debating women's morality in her condemnation of cycling (Mrs Elizabeth Lynn Linton, "The Cycling Craze for Ladies," *Lady's Realm* 1, no. 2 (December, 1896): 173-7.

97. Steele, 1985, 130.

98. *Ibid.*

fashion closely but not too closely since, clearly, dress functioned as a symbolic language, advertising a woman's qualities.⁹⁹

Finally, a third theme that pervaded the criticisms of rational dress for cyclists was the concern that, by wearing bifurcated costumes, women might be mistaken for men. The underlying fear was that a woman might find herself socially out of depth, or even abandoned to danger if her costume were uncharitably construed. She could not expect the courteous reception which an outward display of femininity might accord her.

It seems likely that the issue of mistaken gender identity was disproportionately satirised in magazines and newspapers rather than actually experienced by riders, and suggests that this particular fear surrounding bifurcated dress might have been exaggerated.¹⁰⁰ The less radical designs suggested by the dress reform movement, in contrast, received much less media attention although they were probably more often adopted. Divided skirts and modestly shortened skirts, for example, remained within the bounds of appropriate feminine dress. Satire and ridicule were a means by which audiences communicated their conviction that the woman dressed in bifurcated clothing was dressed for the wrong part, in this case, for the *male* role rather than the female role. In Goffman's terms, "the performer [has allowed her] presentation to suffer from inadequate dramaturgical direction."¹⁰¹

The fear that women might be mistaken for men was not entirely unfounded; several instances were reported in New Zealand. The proprietor of one Central Otago hotel chose to deliberately mistake the two Misses Mitchell for men on account of their rational dress, when he greeted them with the words: "What can I do for you, my two wee laddies?"¹⁰² There were other reports of a similar nature.¹⁰³ But given that even the most bifurcated costume was distinctly feminized, it is reasonable to assume that, far from being genuine cases of mistaken identity, they were probably deliberate ploys to ridicule or insult women who wore bifurcated dress.¹⁰⁴ While she was resting by a road in Taieri,¹⁰⁵ for example, one woman in a

99. *Ibid.*, 131-2.

100. See, for example, Patricia Marks, 1990, in which she examines the satirical portrayal of the 'New Woman' in British and American late-nineteenth century periodicals.

101. Goffman, 1971, 60.

102. *NZW*, 11 April 1896, 4.

103. A similar incident was mentioned in *NZW*, 15 June 1897, 6, for example.

104. The styles of bloomers and knickerbockers worn by women could not easily be mistaken for men's trousers, except, maybe, at a distance. Sources concerning nineteenth-century female transvestism, on the other hand, show many women who were successful in deceiving their audience into thinking they were men. These women usually had their hair cut in a masculine style, wore exactly the same clothes (including hats) as men did, and adopted masculine body language and habits, such as smoking. *e.g.*, Georges Sand. See Sylvia Baynes, "Transvestism and the Advancement of Women," in *Women's Studies Association Conference Papers, Dunedin, August 1987*, ed. Mary O'Hagan (Auckland: Women's Studies Association, 1987), 10-11. (continued...)

bifurcated costume was asked by a passing carrier for some tobacco. Indignant at the insult of his 'mistake,' she cycled disdainfully away.¹⁰⁶ Another story was recounted where one member of a female trio wore bloomers on a tour of the Otago Goldfields.¹⁰⁷ Everywhere she went, she attracted a great deal of unwanted attention and was harassed. She was mistaken for a man at one hotel, and the landlord did not know where to accommodate her:

The landlord had only one room to place at their disposal, but though two of them might share it he did not see what he could do with 'the man' of the party. After a somewhat heated debate this point was settled, and our worn-out travellers got their much-needed rest.¹⁰⁸

The *New Zealand Wheelman* surmised that rational dress had not yet become a familiar sight in Otago.¹⁰⁹ Defenders of bifurcated costume dismissed as irrational the notion that women could be mistaken for men, since every effort was made to design costumes which were becoming to the wearer. Apart from her dress, a woman's composure and conduct should give observers the message that they were encountering a woman and not a man.

The deliberate misinterpretation of gender can be understood as evidence of the struggle between performers and audiences to define the situation. In the examples above, the audiences flatly denied the performers any credibility at all, so that in their eyes, a woman in bifurcated costume was no lady. The *New Zealand Wheelman's* observation that people in an isolated part of the country were unfamiliar with, and consequently suspicious of, women in rational dress, highlights the limited previous experiences this audience could draw on to interpret the situation. Perhaps remnants of the reputation of the early history of the Central Otago Goldfields - where there was an abundance of alcohol and where prostitution was rife - helped prolong the conservative stereotype of respectable womanhood, the only possible contrast to the familiar depraved female figures in that area in the 1860s. Such an orthodox view of female respectability could not reconcile the incongruity of a respectable woman and bifurcated clothing.¹¹⁰

104(...continued)

Association, New Zealand, 1988), 1-21. See also Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1981).

105. Taieri, just south of Dunedin, was a popular destination on day trips from Dunedin.

106. *NZW*, 18 May 1897, 6

107. The Otago Goldfields had become a tourist attraction by the 1890s.

108. *NZW*, 15 June 1897, 6.

109. *Ibid.*

110. Much of the entertainment available in remote gold mining areas was offered by women who were both music hall performers and prostitutes, who probably appeared in knickerbocker underwear as part of their shows. Folklore could have passed down the dual image of women as either respectable or degraded.

Issues about Manly Behaviour

As well as concern about the masculinising of women's appearances, there was also the worry that women were increasingly aping masculine behaviours. Where graceful posture was sacrificed to the thrilling sensations of the ride, for example, and with careless disregard for safety, people criticised women for their masculine behaviour. The situation was exacerbated when masculine conduct was exhibited on a more formal plane, such as by entering the competitive bicycle races discussed in Chapter 3. Whenever such highly conspicuous conduct was engaged in, grave doubts were cast on cyclists' claims of respectability and made it all the more difficult for more conservative women to assert and promote their redefinition of femininity. The term 'New Woman', as I pointed out earlier, embodied women who wanted to act and behave like men, and to have all the same entitlements. The ideology of the New Woman was a distinct departure from, and indeed a threat to, the traditional nineteenth-century middle-class ideal of femininity.

Women who failed to display a clearly feminine riding style earned such masculine epithets as 'mannish' or 'hoyden'. Demarcation between what constituted feminine or masculine cycling behaviour was a fine line. Bicycling was held responsible for inducing all kinds of unpleasant practices among women, such as the use of slang, smoking, drinking, street lounging, loud behaviour, *etc.*¹¹¹ In France, England and America, for example, regardless of how they rode their bicycles, female cyclists were labelled 'grown-up tomboys', or 'adult hoydens'. In defence, 'Altiora' likened the female 'hoyden' to the 'male rowdy', neither type of which was produced by exposure to the fresh air and exercise that cycling produced, she argued.¹¹²

Both posture and pace were distinctly gendered aspects of bicycle riding style. As I discussed earlier, the desirable posture for female cyclists was to sit erect, eyes to the front, arms close to the sides, with minimal body movement other than that required for pedalling. Advice on posture focused on both the health and safety benefits of good deportment and the graceful appearance of the rider.¹¹³ As they became more confident riders, however, some women began to enjoy the exhilaration of riding fast and furiously. 'Scorching' was considered quite inappropriate for female cyclists, regardless of the circumstances,¹¹⁴ and fast riding was

111. *NZGLJ*, 9 October 1897, 493; *NZW*, 30 April 1898, 9.

112. *NZC*, 14 August 1897, 5.

113. *NZW*, 20 November 1893, 14; 28 May 1896, 5; 31 October 1900, 5.

114. 'Scorching' refers to riding as fast as possible, usually without regard for anyone else. The average riding speed was about eight miles an hour, which 'scorching' exceeded. 'Scorching' was frequently cited as responsible for accidents and collisions. 'Scorching' was not exactly condoned for male cyclists, but was regarded as somewhat typical of men; in women, it was positively shocking. Even riding fast downhill without back pedalling was a shocking behaviour in women. *NZW*, 16 November 1895, 13; *OW*, 12 November 1896, 37.

censured for two main reasons. In the first instance, it inevitably made women highly conspicuous. It was so unlikely for a respectable woman to ‘scorch’ that the idea was used to joke affectionately about the riding speed of well-known women such as the Queen of England or Lady Brassey, the wife of the Governor of Australia.¹¹⁵ In the second place, fast riding necessitated an entirely different approach, stooping over the handlebars, a posture in complete contrast to a graceful upright style. Besides being clearly masculine, fast riding was also associated with the notion of ‘fast’ women, and was therefore entirely an inappropriate practice for respectable female riders.

Riding transgressions also provoked accusations of masculinisation. Sometimes women rode recklessly in the streets, darting in and out amongst the traffic and racing cabs along the streets. There were also problems with women riding on the footpaths and disregarding basic road rules such as keeping to one side of the road.¹¹⁶ Carelessness was, according to ‘Theta’, one of the main causes of prejudice against cycling.¹¹⁷ Undoubtedly it was also a factor in the prejudice against women’s cycling, since it heightened the masculinising effect of cycling on women’s behaviour and sullied their feminine charm. Exhibitionism, as masculine styles of riding clearly were interpreted, was not tolerated as part of the female repertoire of public behaviour. Such conduct challenged the very foundation of feminine propriety by breaching the rules of conduct (particularly modesty and self-effacement) that were, for all intents and purposes, regarded as natural, inviolable, and fundamentally right.

Competitive cycle racing epitomised everything that was masculine about cycling and was therefore unequivocally considered a male pursuit. When women did race, their competitions were not taken seriously but were, instead, regarded as a great spectacle for public entertainment, drawing large crowds of curious onlookers.¹¹⁸ Although there are no known New Zealand examples, the ability of women’s racing events to draw large crowds was exploited by entrepreneurs overseas, who made a great deal of money out of public voyeurism.¹¹⁹ Even

115. *NZW*, 25 August 1897, 7; 10 August 1895, 6. *NZW* recounted an anecdote where an English male scorcher managed to defeat a charge against him on the grounds that since he was riding with a lady, albeit at sixteen miles an hour, he could not have possibly been scorching (*NZW*, 20 September 1899, 7).

116. See Chapter 3, where I described these and other transgressions in detail.

117. *NZW*, 1 March 1899, 5.

118. See Chapter 3.

119. For example, as a fund raising activity, the Brighton Fire Brigade, England, held a ladies’ race, knowing it was both cheaper to stage and would bring more revenue than a men’s race (*NZW*, 21 July 1894, 12). Sometimes women who raced professionally earned large sums of money which, together with perks, exceeded that earned by professional male racers. These women were actively sought out and booked for appearances months in advance, and railways were sometimes willing to subsidise their travel costs, so popular were they as public entertainers. Mr Josiah Ritchie, manager of races at The Aquarium velodrome, London, reported bringing Frenchwomen over to England, free of charge, paying them between
(continued...)

the rational dress movement in England exploited the public's inquisitiveness about women's racing to promote its cause.¹²⁰

Women's cycle racing was as popular with the public as it was an anathema to racing establishments, which actively repressed women's interests in the sport, especially overseas. Women were refused racing licenses, and tracks where women's races were held were threatened with disqualification if races went ahead.¹²¹ Similarly in New Zealand, serious competitive racing within the national structure was not tolerated by the governing racing body.¹²²

Despite women's racing gradually becoming more commonplace throughout the 1890s, women were never universally accepted as cycle racers.¹²³ According to 'Theta', the public reaction in New Zealand was quite mixed:

. . . there was considerable applause as the 'ludies' made their appearance, but the applause could not be taken altogether as complimentary, and some of the remarks were distinctly the reverse. Women's races may be attractive as a matter of curiosity, but I am pleased to say that the public opinion is distinctly against women's racing.¹²⁴

Although 'Theta' was a dedicated dress reformer (a.k.a. Kate Wilkinson) and a progressive young woman in general, she could not condone racing for women. Her stance highlights the concern of her peers that cycling for women required only some modification of the prevailing ideals of feminine respectability, as opposed to a desire to completely forsake them, thereby becoming unsexed.

Cycling and the Ideology of the New Woman

The more unusual aspects of women's cycling presented such a strong departure from the *status quo* and a close alliance with masculine culture, that women on bicycles came to symbolise the New Woman, who was equally unconventional (see figure 2, Chapter 1). Arising from debates in England and North America about women's changing social roles in the 1880s, the New Woman was an idea, embodied as "an iconographic image of modernity, gender inversion and

119(...continued)

£3 and £10 a week (depending on how popular they were), paid their meals and hotel bills, and prize money won in racing. Some women made between £50 and £60 a week just in prize money. He added, "The male riders . . . were not so well paid as the ladies . . . and proved not nearly so great an attraction to the public." (*Hub*, 12 September 1896, 221).

120. *NZC*, 8 October 1898, 10.

121. *e.g.*, The Professional Licensing Committees of the National Cycling Union (England); the League of American Wheelman.

122. See, for example, Chapter 3, page 85, where I mentioned a ladies race proposed by the Hawera Cycling Club which was not given approval by the League of New Zealand Wheelman unless it was changed to a novelty race. *NZC*, 16 October 1897, 19.

123. *OW*, 5 December 1895, 34; *NZGLJ*, 11 April 1896, 408.

124. *NZW*, 9 November 1898, 7.

moral instability which could be used to ridicule, condemn and even occasionally to praise a range of female activity and feminist aspiration."¹²⁵ The New Woman stood for political, social, and economic equality; the real women who espoused these values possessed the economic resources and social standing which enabled them to "defy proprieties, pioneer new roles, and still insist upon a rightful place within the genteel world."¹²⁶ Conventional gender relations, hitherto sacrosanct and immutable, set by the laws of religion and nature, were seriously challenged by the ideology of the New Woman.

The distinguishing characteristics of the New Woman were her independent spirit and her athletic zeal. According to the ideology, the New Woman played sport, wore her skirts above her ankles, loosened her corsets, wanted a good education, expected to marry and have children, but also wanted a life beyond her home, maybe even a career.¹²⁷ Since the New Woman was principally in search of the same social opportunities and experiences that men had enjoyed, the ideology surrounding this construction included an association in people's minds with a masculinised woman. As an image, she was often depicted wearing masculine clothes, especially knickerbockers, and was frequently portrayed on a bicycle (Figure 9).¹²⁸ The New Woman thus came to represent masculine behaviour and values in general, whilst her concerns for improved maternity and the future of the race were conveniently overlooked by her critics. Sympathetic readings of the New Woman saw her as a product of industrial capitalism, which forced women to seek employment outside the home and exploited women as a source of cheap labour.¹²⁹ A more positive interpretation of the New Woman regarded her as a symbol of social progress, whereby society benefitted from her talents and skills, now for the first time shared beyond the private domestic sphere. The New Woman was an icon of a modern society as Lady Stout, wife of the New Zealand Politician Sir Robert Stout, ably portrayed her:

In New Zealand now, the New Woman demands the right to have a voice in the making of the laws that she is expected to keep, and in the administration of these laws in the departments of charitable aid and education, in which she is particularly and specially qualified to take part. . . . The New Woman has set herself the task of improving the conditions of life for women, hoping thereby to improve the conditions for men as well, thus making it possible for both to raise the standard of the life of fatherhood and

125. Russell, 1994, 31. 'Gender inversion' was a nineteenth-century term for homosexuality. The New Woman was sometimes interpreted as a lesbian.

126. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 245.

127. Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), 54.

128. Russell, 1994, 31; original source of illustration: *The Chalet du Cycle at the Bois de Boulogne*. By Jean Beraud (detail). Oil on canvas, c. 1900. Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

129. *Press*, 3 January 1895, 4.

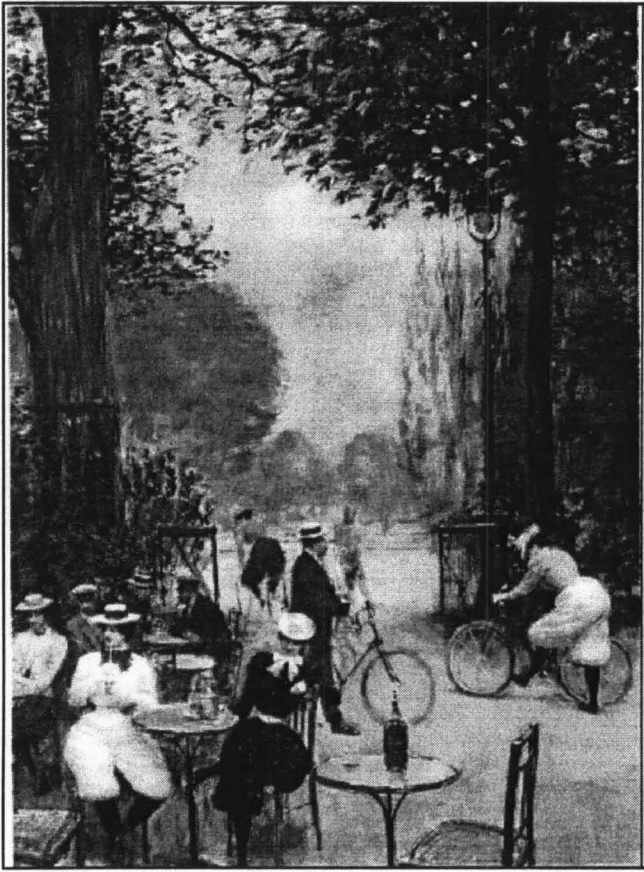


Figure 9: 'New Women', Bois de Boulogne, c. 1900.
[Source: Fox, 1989, May 1-6.]

motherhood to a higher, purer plane than has been even dreamt of in the past.¹³⁰

Because cycling symbolised nineteenth-century social progress, it was deduced that any woman riding a bicycle must also be socially progressive and, hence, a New Woman. The association of women's cycling with masculinity persisted as an overarching theme portrayed by the New Woman, and was frequently ridiculed in the popular press. The satirization by *Punch* of the New Woman as a cyclist was reproduced in the *New Zealand Wheelman*, for example:

Daisy: "How did you feel in your new bicycle suit?"

Eileen: "Oh, I felt like a *new man!*"¹³¹

Punch also made great mileage out of people's fears that women in knickerbockers would be mistaken for men.¹³² Masculine cycling behaviours such as fast and reckless riding were also lampooned.

As well as depicting the nexus between cycling and masculinity, the New Woman was used to convey an association between cycling and immorality. The bicycle was portrayed as the means by which New Women could socialise unsupervised outside the home, a symbol of sexual adventure and promise. A rich vocabulary of euphemisms and puns arose in relation to cycling and morality, eliciting fears for the 'fallen woman' who had 'strayed off the path', for example. But the most poignant satirical metaphor depicting the link between cycling and immorality was the woman who rode her bicycle at great speed. Rather than targeting this

130. Anna Stout, "The New Woman," *Women and the Vote*, Victorian New Zealand - A Reprint Series no. 7 (Dunedin: Hocken Library, 1986), 19-20.

131. *NZW*, 11 July 1895, 11.

132. Adburgham, 1961; Marks, 1990.

behaviour as masculine *per se*, the 'fast' cyclist represented in a more superior way the immoral woman.

The adoption of masculine clothing and behaviours was not only an affront to conventional feminine proprieties, but was for many observers a complete mystery as to its motivations, especially considering the depth of public feeling which cyclists endured as a consequence. What could possibly motivate respectable women to put themselves in such an invidious position? For the audience, it was not so much that the rules of feminine propriety were broken, but that women *deliberately chose* to do so odd a thing as to break these particular rules.¹³³ The New Woman was an idea that both explained and justified why such gross improprieties were committed, *i.e.*, in the name of progress. As Winkworth contends, "there may be no single identity for the New Woman, but there was a common thread of an active, assured and attractive woman, and the bicycle was her signature accessory."¹³⁴ The New Woman was the quintessential female figure of nineteenth-century modernity.

Conclusions

The debates about women's cycling revolved around the perceived suitability of the activity for respectable middle-class women. Ultimately, these debates represented the competition between conservative and progressive ideas about what constituted middle-class femininity. Cyclists challenged conventional beliefs and in their place tried to establish an alternative set of attributes which, they argued, were equally respectable and desirable in women. In reconciling cycling and femininity, cyclists presented a social front which was popularly embodied in the ideology of the New Woman. By the turn of the century, so many women were cycling that it was now the non-cycling woman who was cause for comment. Having identified and discussed the debates surrounding women's cycling in New Zealand, Chapter 5 concludes the study by accounting for the acceptance of cycling as a suitable activity for women in the face of these debates.

133. Goffman, 1963, 234.

134. Winkworth, 1989, 117.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

THE ACCEPTANCE OF WOMEN'S CYCLING

By the turn of the century, the controversies surrounding New Zealand women on bicycles had significantly diminished; the sight of respectable women pursuing a wide variety of activities in public space, including cycling, had become more commonplace. This final chapter accounts for the demise of the debates examined in the previous chapter as an inevitable outcome of social change associated with modernity. Within a short space of time in late-nineteenth century New Zealand, people had become increasingly mobile, people of different social classes now intermingled in shared public space, increased discretionary income facilitated the growth of commercialised leisure (such as shopping, tourism, arts entertainment, and horse racing), and gender relations had been significantly re-negotiated.¹

This thesis has focused on the transformation of gender roles. In this final chapter, I draw upon Erving Goffman's notions of 'abstract generalisability' and 'collective representation' to explain how the late-nineteenth century transformation of gender roles was expressed through women's cycling in New Zealand. In the concluding section of the chapter, I discuss the significance of the research and its contribution to the field of women's sporting history, and propose avenues for future research.

Recapitulation of the Argument

In late-nineteenth century New Zealand, cycling acted as a significant catalyst in transforming the conduct and appearance of women in public space, as well as stimulating debates about the suitability of cycling for women's physical and moral well-being. The argument presented in this study is summarised in two parts. First, riding a bicycle facilitated the legitimacy of nineteenth-century respectable women entering and occupying public space. Second, the

1. James Watson, *Links: A History of Transport and New Zealand Society* (Wellington: GP Publications, in association with the Ministry of Transport and with the assistance of the Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1996); Alan Grey, *Aotearoa and New Zealand: A Historical Geography* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 1994); Hamish Keith, *New Zealand Yesterdays: A Look at Our Recent Past* (Sydney: Readers' Digest Services, 1984); Barbara Brookes, Margaret Tennant, and Charlotte Macdonald, eds., *Women in History 2: Essays on European Women in New Zealand* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1991).

presence in public of women riding bicycles underscored competing definitions of middle-class femininity which were already in contention before 1890. In this context, the meaning of 'a woman on a bicycle' was contested by both cyclists and non-cyclists, as well as by opponents and proponents of cycling. The dual nature of the bicycle, *i.e.*, its use for recreation as well as a means of conveyance, focused the debates between competing ideologies of femininity in a way that no other sporting activity had done hitherto, nor, I would argue, has done since.

Women's Presence in Public

Until women began cycling in the early 1890s, a 'respectable' middle-class woman's legitimate presence in public was confined to mainly utilitarian activities such as conducting her domestic business, or recreational outings, usually in the company of at least one other person. A sense of decorum prevailed at all times. Women were careful to dress and behave appropriately and to draw minimal unwanted attention to themselves. A major hallmark of a respectable nineteenth-century lady was her ability to behave inconspicuously in public. In contrast, riding a bicycle made a woman's presence highly conspicuous and, as a result, attracted a great deal of unwanted, and frequently disagreeable, attention. Many argued that women who rode bicycles deserved the unpleasant reactions they received, that the women themselves had provoked this response. That cyclists themselves were held responsible for their unfortunate experiences indicates how much female inconspicuousness was an integral part of the nineteenth-century mindset about female respectability. On the other hand, people in favour of women's cycling argued strongly for a woman's right to cycle and to do other new things as well. Between these two extremes lay a great deal of confusion and uncertainty about how to regard women on bicycles. For the many people in this intermediate position, it was puzzling that a respectable woman should want to place herself in such a fraught situation; this audience was genuinely unsure of just what constituted an appropriate response to a woman on a bicycle.

Contesting Definitions of Femininity

In addition to challenging the notion that women should be inconspicuous in public, women's cycling also challenged beliefs about what was considered proper behaviour for nineteenth-century middle-class women and penetrated to the heart of what was believed to be intrinsically feminine at that time. Proper behaviour for nineteenth-century females was articulated around a set of prescriptive codes of conduct and appearance designed to convey respectability. Female cyclists, cognizant of the importance of maintaining a respectable façade, were faced with a fundamental dilemma: how to reconcile the ignominy of their conspicuousness on the bicycle

with the social imperative to maintain an impression of middle-class respectability when in public. Cyclists adopted a range of rationalisations to justify their position. Radical cyclists argued that bifurcated costumes and competitive racing were entirely appropriate for respectable women in the modern day and age. At the opposite extreme, conservative cyclists favoured fashionable skirts and rode with great decorum at a modest pace, carefully observing the etiquette of cycling. Between these positions were women whose motives to cycle and whose level of involvement varied substantially; their interpretations of what constituted proper conduct and appearance likewise varied.

The cycling debates about what was considered 'good' for women were cogently argued in terms of women's physical and moral vulnerability. Medical and moral arguments were intricately interwoven. Conservative factions argued that women's cycling went beyond the simple questioning of established medical wisdom to jeopardise women's physical welfare. For proponents of cycling, on the other hand, women could only benefit, both physically and psychologically; as long as it was adopted in a rational manner, cycling promised vast improvements in health as well as lifting the spirits of women unaccustomed to physical and mental activity. Again, between these two positions lay a range of views and opinions about the physical and emotional effects of cycling on women. To the charge that cycling was immoral and would lead to female depravity, defenders of cycling were quick to point out that the responsibility to maintain virtue lay with the rider and was not a fault of cycling itself; virtuous behaviour was sufficient protection for women on bicycles. Medical professionals and moral crusaders, then, espoused numerous and disparate positions on the nature and extent of women's vulnerability.

A grave concern about the new ways women and men behaved together in public underscored debates about feminine conduct, behaviour and vulnerability. For all but the very élite of New Zealand society, elaborate rituals of heterosocial propriety were beginning to give way to informal and spontaneous social liaisons between the sexes. As a recreational activity, cycling provided opportunities for women and men to freely mingle on their bicycles. At first, this occurred under the auspices of cycle club outings but, before long, this mingling occurred spontaneously amongst groups of friends and acquaintances who arranged their own cycling activities. Increased urban migration, expanding the size and diversity of city populations, likewise afforded the sexes even greater opportunities for unsupervised interaction, on and off their bicycles. In this context of changing heterosocial relations, the bicycle both facilitated and represented women's increasing independence as they pursued employment and recreation

beyond their domestic confines and obligations, as well as expressing their individuality in novel and sometimes daring ways.

In summary, the bicycle was a site of numerous and diverse uses and interpretations. It was used functionally, to transport women to an expanding array of employment and educational opportunities. It was also used for active recreational enjoyment. It afforded, moreover, increasing opportunities to meet and socialise with a wider range of male acquaintances, free from the restrictions of etiquette and requirements of chaperonage. The belief that women were vulnerable nevertheless endured. Women required singular supervision and advice to safeguard both their bodies and their reputations. The diversity of responses to women's cycling testifies to femininity as a social construct, and its constant assessment and re-assessment by cyclists and non-cyclists alike.

Transforming Gender Roles, Changing Femininity

In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the introduction of women's cycling and the struggle for its acceptance offer a way of charting the transformation of gender roles in New Zealand society. Circumscribed by persisting fundamental notions of nineteenth-century middle-class femininity, women on bicycles were initially careful about what impressions they gave off, heeded medical advice, and maintained decorum in their interactions with their male counterparts when riding. By 1910, however, women's presence in public was no longer problematic and women on bicycles were able to ride with impunity.

Cycling journalists reflected the changing attitudes of wider society toward women as they traced this transformation of women's public persona in New Zealand cycling magazines and newspapers. From 1890 to the early-1900s, articles in the *New Zealand Cyclist* and the *New Zealand Wheelman* which vilified female cyclists, for example, decreased while, at the same time, the focus of articles generally shifted to reflect the increasingly pragmatic interests of female cyclists. No longer worried about whether or not they should cycle, women wanted to know more about how to maintain their bicycles rather than their decorum;² to learn of new routes rather than new fashions; and to lobby for better roads rather than the right to use the road in the first place. It was as part of the general transformation of social attitudes about women's presence in public that cycling became unquestionably accepted as an activity suitable for women by 1910.

2. *New Zealand Wheelman*, 16 January 1901, 5, 8.

Abstract Generalisability

I argued in Chapter 1 that congruence is at the root of establishing and building a standard script for heterosocial encounters, the rules for which are clearly understood by both performers and the audience.³ Goffman's argument - that social fronts tend to become institutionalised through stereotypical expectations ('abstract generalisations') which eventually take on a meaning and status of their own, and that these fronts become 'collective representations', facts in their own right⁴ - is predicated upon the significance of establishing and maintaining congruence in human encounters. In the early-1890s women on bicycles appeared profoundly incongruous to their audience but, by the late-1890s, with the liberalisation of both medical and sociopolitical opinion about women, attitudes to women's cycling also began to change. People became familiar with the arguments for why women riding bicycles were no longer *necessarily* disreputable. By the mid-1890s, as people began to expand their interpretations of women on bicycles, and accept that the hallmarks of middle-class femininity were changing, they could be almost certain that if they saw a woman on a bicycle, she was more likely than not to be middle-class *and* respectable. In Goffman's terms, the social front of a woman riding a bicycle had become an abstract generalisation, institutionalised through the stereotypical expectations of the audience. The process of establishing a new stereotype of feminine respectability signalled the early stages of the transformation of the attributes of conventional nineteenth-century femininity (accommodating, beautiful, domesticated, emotional, good natured, inconspicuous, philanthropic, virtuous, and vulnerable) which I identified in Chapters 1 and 4.⁵

From the mid-1890s to the early-1900s, condonation of women's cycling was conditional only, despite its widespread acceptance and approval. Women's conduct and appearance remained a central focus of concern. As late as 1899, for example, the *New Zealand Cyclist* urged women to both check their appearance before going out riding, and to ride gracefully so that "we should have no clumsy, ungainly wheelwomen to offend our eyesight This is quite the most important consideration of graceful riding."⁶ As an inevitable consequence of cycling, conspicuousness was no longer disgraceful:

. . . and now that the scare about indecency of ladies riding bicycles has disappeared, we admire them as they glide along . . .⁷

3. See Chapter 1, page 32.

4. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971),

37.

5. See figure 2 in Chapter 1 and figure 6 in Chapter 4.

6. *New Zealand Cyclist*, 19 August 1899, 6.

7. *NZC*, 12 June 1897, 12.

The emphasis on being *inconspicuous* endured, however, as an important factor in promoting cycling as a suitable activity for respectable women:

" . . . the girl who can forget herself so far as to make herself conspicuous by her behaviour when riding would do so under any circumstances, just like her masculine prototype."⁸

One way to deflect unwanted attention was to dress and behave modestly. Modesty continued to be emphasised, particularly as shorter skirts gained in popularity near the turn of the century, no doubt partly as a result of pressure from dress reformers. Shorter skirts were recommended over hitched-up ground-length skirts,⁹ but they were nevertheless not to be too short.¹⁰ Clearly, short skirts that revealed the contours of a woman's ankle were bound to make women conspicuous, as this joke shows:

"A polite man has been defined as he who can look at a pretty girl on a bicycle and keep his eyes off her feet . . ."¹¹

The reference to feet here may signal the romantic re-interpretation of women's lower limbs. In the early-1890s, the ankles and feet were sexualised. Indeed, the exposure of the ankle was taken to be a sign of immorality and was associated with prostitutes. Later, as skirts became shorter, gaiters were added to hide the ankles. But, as I showed in Chapter 4, attractive and revealing footwear eventually superseded boots and gaiters, as if to deliberately attract the male eye. Nevertheless, women may have still felt self-conscious about displaying their feet. This self-consciousness may have prompted some women to go so far as to wear shoes too small in order to make their feet appear small and dainty. This practice concerned dress reformers who argued that enlarged feet would certainly result from wearing the wrong-sized shoes.¹² The focus on fashion in the ladies' pages gradually shifted to favour sensible designs for cycling skirts, as well as the care and cleaning of cycling clothes.¹³ Advice to female cyclists, however, continued to emphasise refinement in their quest for pragmatic, safe and comfortable cycling attire.

In the late-1890s, journalists continued to view unfavourably what they considered 'unwomanly' aspects of women's cycling. Although women's cycle racing was regularly reported in the New Zealand cycling press, for example, serious competition was not wholeheartedly condoned. It was considered indecorous and immodest, as well as potentially

8. *NZC*, 31 December 1898, 6.

9. *NZW*, 15 January 1898, 28.

10. *NZC*, 18 June 1898, 9.

11. *NZC*, 15 January 1898, 28.

12. *NZC*, 18 June 1898, 9.

13. *NZW*, 11 January 1899, 7; 21 August 1901, 7; *NZC*, 2 July 1898, 9.

bad for women's health.¹⁴ At best women's cycle racing was received with bemusement. Competitive cycle races for New Zealand women, largely confined to picnics and other social events,¹⁵ were held from time to time throughout the country. These races were usually sponsored by sports bodies rather than cycling clubs, suggesting that women were never considered as serious competitors by the official cycle racing body, the League of New Zealand Wheelmen.¹⁶ Both 'Theta' and 'Altiora' routinely reported on women's cycle racing in their ladies' cycling columns and, whilst each writer attempted to objectively summarise public feeling on the matter, it is clear that neither could condone racing for women. 'Theta', for example, made the following statement a year after the first women's race was held at Lancaster Park, Christchurch:

The report of a "ladies'" race at Ball's Bridge, Ireland, recalls to my mind a remarkably tame and unedifying meeting of "cyclodonnas" at Lancaster Park, Christchurch. As at that meeting, there was considerable applause as the "lydies" made their appearance, but the applause could not be taken altogether as complimentary, and some of the remarks were distinctly the reverse. Women's races may be attractive as a matter of curiosity, but I am pleased to say that the public opinion is distinctly against women racing.¹⁷

'Altiora' summed up public opinion in a similar way: "Happily for us, the mania for record-breaking [in cycle races] has not "caught on" among colonial women. Let us hope it never will."¹⁸ Whilst 'Altiora' generally held more conservative views than 'Theta' (her position being consistent with the aims of the *New Zealand Cyclist* - to be much more representative of cyclists than its rival the *New Zealand Wheelman*), both journalists concurred with the widely-held sentiment that women's competitive cycle racing was not suitable for respectable women.¹⁹

In addition to competitive racing, other unwomanly behaviours were also frowned upon. Minor infringements of road rules were tolerated,²⁰ for example, but deliberate fast riding or reckless thrill-seeking, on the other hand, were not.²¹ Another enduring concern was the obsessive and exclusive interest some women showed in their cycling. These women, it seems, lived to cycle, clocking up mileage, endlessly cleaning and oiling their machines, and talking of

14. *NZW*, 9 November 1898, 7; *NZC*, 9 July 1898, 9; 8 July 1899, 9.

15. *NZW*, 22 February 1899, 7; *NZC*, 21 October 1899, 9-10.

16. e.g., Kaiapoi: *NZC*, 14 October 1899, 9, 14; Wellington: *NZW*, 19 October 1898, 16; Masterton: *NZW*, 4 January 1899, 12 and 11 January 1899, 22; Weraroa: *NZC*, 29 May 1897, 13; Blenheim: *NZC*, 5 June 1897, 25; Wanganui: *NZC*, 12 June 1897, 3; Otaki: *NZC*, 3 April 1897, 7; Dunedin: *NZW*, 8 January 1902, 11; *NZW*, 20 September 1899, 7.

17. *NZW*, 9 November 1898, 7.

18. *NZC*, 29 October 1898, 6.

19. 'Altiora' once endorsed an article decrying women's cycle racing, as well as rational dress; hitherto, her position was unclear. *NZC*, 4 November 1899, 5.

20. The 'fair sex' was somewhat fickle, it was argued; much mileage was made from humorous stories of chivalrous male riders on the receiving end of women's reckless and unpredictable riding.

21. See below for discussion of recklessness and contesting the right to space on the road.

nothing else.²² A balanced attitude toward cycling (such as using it for exercise, shopping, and visiting) was favoured as a guaranteed strategy to help women resist boring their friends with cycling talk, the behaviour of a cycle "addict" in 'Altiora's' opinion: "Like golfmania, cyclomania is a most distressing affliction - for the patient's friends."²³ The acceptance of women's cycling was conditional upon their ability to moderate their passion.

Finally, the issue of bifurcated rational dress remained highly contentious. Of all the rational costume designs, only the divided skirt was acceptable and cycling magazines continued to feature new patterns for this costume.²⁴ The wisdom of wearing underskirts was debated in opposition to wearing knickerbockers under skirts, a dilemma because both options attracted the attention of onlookers.²⁵ 'Theta', one of the prime movers of dress reform in Canterbury, lamented several times how seldom the bifurcated rational costume was worn.²⁶ 'Altiora', on the other hand, predictably maintained a conservative position on this issue:

A leading manufacturer prophesied some time ago that in a few years no more women's wheels would be made, because all women would then be wearing bloomers and divided skirts, and riding diamond frame machines. So far, however, the tendency is rather the other way. The knickerbockered cycliste [*sic*] is fast disappearing, ladies' cycling dresses are made as near perfection as possible, and fully meet the necessities of the majority of women. As for the scorcher and the female athlete, they may still make themselves conspicuous if they like, but the woman of good taste will pursue the even tenor of her way in a becomingly-made coat and skirt for many years yet.²⁷

To onlookers, bifurcated costumes were ugly, masculine, and immodest, showing too much leg; altogether, they attracted the wrong sort of attention:

Miss Up-to-date: "Do you think bloomers make a girl look shorter?
Her mother: "Yes, and make the men look longer!"²⁸

On the other hand, such costumes could, it was joked, avert male attention on account of their ugliness:

Maud: "Why has Lilian given up wearing rational bicycling costume? Did George object?"
Ethel: "Oh, no! He said that he approved of it because it would prevent her attracting any other man's admiration."²⁹

Despite the strong arguments for its safety and comfort, bifurcation found no legitimacy as a cycling costume for respectable women, and the well-tailored non-divided cycling skirt prevailed

22. *NZC*, 29 October 1898, 6.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *NZC*, 29 January 1898, 5.

25. *NZC*, 22 October 1898, 10.

26. *NZW*, 28 December 1898, 9; 26 June 1901, 3.

27. *NZC*, 12 August 1899, 6.

28. *NZC*, 30 July 1898, 14-5.

29. *NZC*, 24 July 1897, 6.

as the most appropriate dress. The endurance of the skirt over bifurcated garments for women, which has continued to this day, is an indication of just how important the signalling of gender identity is to audiences.

As more and more women cycled after the mid-1890s, anxieties about the potential dangers of mixed-sex socialising gradually gave way to a feeling of optimistic anticipation about the possibility of romantic attachments between women and men. As I argued in Chapter 4, public anxiety about the morality of women's cycling abated with the reinterpretation of cycling encounters between women and men as romantic rather than dangerous.³⁰ Romance emerged strongly as a theme during the mid-1890s in cycling magazines, newspapers like the *Otago Witness*, and periodicals like the *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies' Journal*.³¹ Poems, jokes and anecdotes about romantic relationships between women and men signalled a shift in attitudes away from the gravity of women's cycling to take on a more frivolous and lighthearted tone. The theme of the bicycle and courtship, for example, was common by the turn of the century and was incorporated into all kinds of romantic scenarios, from tales of true love to daring elopements. The evasion of parental supervision was probably the most accurate reflection of how women and men orchestrated opportunities to romance one another. The following humorous scene illustrates a situation which may have mirrored reality:

"Yes," said the principal of the young ladies' seminary to the proud parent, "you ought to be very happy, my dear sir, to be the father of so large a family, all the members of which appear to be so devoted to one another."

"Large family! Devoted! What on earth do you mean?"

"Why, yes indeed," continued the principal, beaming through her glasses, "no less than eleven of Mabel's brothers have been here to take her out riding, and she tells me that she expects the tall one with the blue eyes again to-morrow."³²

The deception of parents in a former period may have signalled alarm about Mabel's morality; here, it is obvious that Mabel's courtship activities are harmless and her deception is to be treated with indulgence. Romance rather than promiscuity is understood as the underlying object of her deceptive behaviour.

Etiquette between women and men began to change in the mid-1890s, evolving into a new generation of etiquette and conventions in the early-twentieth century.³³ On the rare

30. See Chapter 4, pages 131 ff.

31. *Otago Witness*, 19 September 1896, 37; 27 August 1896, 37; *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies' Journal*, 17 October 1896, 488; 15 October 1898, 499.

32. *NZW*, 15 February 1899, 12.

33. *NZW*, 13 November 1901, 7.

occasions when advice about riding etiquette appeared in the New Zealand cycling magazines, instructions focused on the more pragmatic concerns of road safety.³⁴ For example,

. . . even chivalry must give way to the rule of the road, and it is a poor compliment to a lady's powers of riding for her companion to bore her into the kerb when meeting other riders, instead of falling back into Indian file.³⁵

The demise of strict practices demonstrates that more flexible heterosocial interaction was both desired and condoned from the mid-1890s. The following commentary about dressing captures the desire to relax existing formalities, even though in New Zealand the application of etiquette was more flexible than in England:

In the matter of men's clothing, the wheel is exercising tremendous influence in London. . . . As a sport it has come to stay, and it is swaying a vaster influence than any man or woman can now imagine in the styles, the material, and the trade. Decidedly it is getting many into freer ways. Not long ago if a man went out with a lady he must put on a certain kind of garment, far more costly than a cycling suit. To-day he sallies forth, whether a town or country gentleman, in a neat tweed knickerbocker suit likely as not, he does not take it off at all. The straitened, particular high-drawn etiquette of society has not had a shock in all this, but has welcomed it, and is welcoming it still - is looking forward to its development in the future.³⁶

Associations between female independence, romance and cycling point to the multifarious meanings that the bicycle held for individual women and the nature of their interactions with the opposite sex. Much as the bicycle may have symbolised women's independence and self-sufficiency, women were perfectly capable of putting on displays of mechanical helplessness while cycling in order to attract the attention of men, for example. On the other hand, most technical advice in the cycling magazines assumed that women actually did perform their own minor repairs. Displaying ineptitude about the mechanics of the bicycle, nevertheless, was a popular romantic theme reflected in cycling humour:

Ethel (to Ada, whose tyre has punctured):

"What is the good of sitting there? Let's get along to the nearest repairer's."

Ada: "No, dear, I shall wait here; some fellow is sure to come along presently and offer to repair it."³⁷

or,

Woman, stopping on the road:

"I do want this young man to speak to me. Ah, I'll ask the loan of his spanner."³⁸

34. *NZW*, 13 November 1898, 10.

35. *NZC*, 17 December 1898, 6.

36. *NZC*, 19 June 1897, 6.

37. *NZC*, 23 July 1898, 27.

38. *NZC*, 21 May 1898, 7.

Women's technical competence, however, was also a popular target for humour:³⁹

- The Mater: "I like your fiancée very much, Jack, but do you think she will make a good housewife? For instance, does she know anything about mending?"
- Jack: "Mending! Why, mother, I've seen her mend a puncture inside five minutes."⁴⁰

Clearly, the concerns of middle-class women shifted away from a preoccupation about the propriety of their cycling; at the same time, women of lower social classes, who were now also expressing an interest in cycling, probably found the technical information more useful than advice about the proprieties of cycling. Whether or not women were technically competent, the thread of romance was a common theme in connection with women's independence and self-sufficiency.

One of the keys to the acceptance of cycling for women was its sanction by the medical profession as a healthy form of exercise. Despite the absence of references to cycling in the *New Zealand Medical Journal*, we can still be confident that New Zealand doctors shared the opinions represented in the British medical profession, and probably advised their patients along similar lines.⁴¹ New Zealand-trained doctors, as well as readers of the New Zealand cycling magazines, were regularly exposed to and followed with interest current international thought about the health implications of women's cycling.

Despite initial fears in the early-1890s that cycling would harm women's health, opinion changed during the decade as doctors and cyclists increasingly spoke of the physical benefits they witnessed. Doctors were reported recommending cycling to their patients,⁴² and called it an 'iron and steel' tonic for both physical and mental well-being:

for patients who have run down in health through business or some domestic worries . . . it allows them to get away from themselves. Cycling is greatly superior to walking in this respect, for while both help to clear the brain, cycling is more effective in making a woman forget her own existence! It is this 'active somnolency' that makes cycling a tonic of tonics.⁴³

39. For a joke about men having to wear buttonless shirts, see *New Zealand Cyclist*, 4 September 1897, 16. This theme persisted in humour, e.g. "A girl can ride a wheel all day / And still be sweetly cherry / But she cannot sew a button on / Because it makes her weary." *NZW*, 29 May 1901, 4.

40. *NZC*, 9 October 1898, 6.

41. Early in the medical history of New Zealand, medical schools relied heavily on British resources, subscribing to the *Lancet* and hosting British medical specialists and teachers, for example. Christchurch Medical School Library has a comprehensive collection of the *Lancet*, for example. Articles and editorials in the *New Zealand Medical Journal* consistently demonstrate strong links with the British medical profession.

42. *NZW*, 23 January 1901, 7.

43. *NZW*, 15 May 1901, 3; 'Iron and steel tonic': *NZW*, 16 January 1901, 5.

Although the general consensus of medical opinion worldwide suggested that as long as women cycled in moderation they would come to no harm nor damage their prospects for bearing children, doctors continued to urge restraint, acknowledging that they did not yet know all the effects of cycling. The following excerpt from an essay "The Abuse of Cycling" by 'A Cycling Doctor', for example, appeared in the *New Zealand Cyclist*:

Caution, caution, caution! This must be our watchword when we seek to benefit, and not to injure ourselves by bicycle riding. It must always be remembered that, as yet, not even the most experienced physician in the world can speak of the ultimate effects that the wholesale adoption of exercise will have upon the race, and especially upon the female sex.⁴⁴

Negative medical pronouncements were still occasionally voiced,⁴⁵ for as late as 1899, a statement from the *British Medical Journal* was published in the *New Zealand Wheelman* to add weight to the conviction that cycling was healthy for women:

What a magnificent set-off to the querulous forebodings of a few panic-stricken medicos is the picture once drawn by the *British Medical Journal* on the general effect of cycling: "It does not require a physician to see the very marked improvement in health and looks which the exercise has caused in so many girls who stayed at home, and either played the piano or stooped over some kind of indoor employment. It is not necessary to go into statistics to prove the benefits which have accrued and will accrue to our people of both sexes in taking the ladies from their piano and the men from the billiard-room or bar."⁴⁶

By the beginning of the twentieth century, people routinely accepted that moderate recreational cycling was one amongst many physical activities which were not only harmless, but beneficial to women. In the short space of ten years, what was previously shocking and unthinkable - that female respectability could extend to riding a bicycle in urban public space - had become, as Goffman puts it, an abstract generalisation.

Independence, physical activity, and social equality were themes which continued to be linked with and reinforced through the symbolism of the New Woman. The editor of the *New Zealand Cyclist*, for example, re-asserted this notion in one of his editorials which reflected on the history of transport and social progress, 1837-97:

... cycling has sprung into popularity at a time when woman is struggling to break the fetters of custom that so long have retarded her freedom and that of the human race, and it forms one of the most powerful agents of this progressive movement. In vain did Mrs Grundy shake her hands in holy horror; the New Woman, if such she must be

44. *NZC*, 8 May 1897, 3.

45. The negative views of Viennese Dr. Hausmann, for example, were widely reported; he still disapproved of cycling for women as late as 1898. *NZW*, 23 November 1898, 7, 8.

46. *NZW*, 22 March 1899, 5.

designated, mounts her wheel, and shows that physical exercise is as becoming to her as to the male sex⁴⁷

That the editor had chosen to focus on women's physical exercise in connection with the New Woman suggests that this was also one of the most obvious links onlookers made between women and cycling. Feats of endurance by women who undertook extensive cycle trips alone or with other women were reported in this vein, for example.⁴⁸ A woman on a bicycle epitomised everything that the New Woman stood for.

Journalists frequently employed the metaphor of the New Woman in the cycling pages of New Zealand magazines to signal the independence cycling offered women. Indicators of female independence and self-determination included numerous stories of older women (sixty, seventy and eighty years old) taking up and enjoying cycling.⁴⁹ The notion of role-reversal was also an expression of independence, and one well-suited to humorous treatment by journalists, as these examples show:

The Biker: "Don't you think it's wathah wiskey to come so far alone on your bike?"
The Stalwart Girl: "Hadn't thought of it; but if you feel timid I'll see you home."⁵⁰

"Is that your wife on a bicycle?"

"It is."

"I thought you said you would never permit her to ride one?"

"I don't permit it; but what difference do you suppose that makes to her?"⁵¹

Another way that journalists toyed with the expression of female independence in connection with the bicycle was to publish satirical material about spinsterhood. Rather than being a pathetic status, spinsterhood was represented as a viable option for cyclists: women would rather cycle than get married, for marriage only held them back, as this poem shows:

Time's Whirligig

Not long ago we thought it strange
To find a crowing hen.
But in this funny age of change
Most women would be men.
The girls who took our hearts by storm
And made us bow to fate,
Now tell us love is not good form
And marriage out of date.

47. *NZC*, 26 June 1897, 17.

48. *e.g.*, *NZC*, 15 October 1898, 9; *NZW*, 29 March 1899, 9.

49. *NZC*, 24 December 1898, 6.

50. *NZC*, 9 April 1898, 8.

51. *NZC*, 23 April 1898, 29.

So as we live scant skirts bring
 No blush of modest shame
 They used to want a diamond ring,
 But now a diamond frame.⁵²

Alternatively, if spinsterhood were the unfortunate consequence of a romance gone wrong, as the poem entitled "Consolation" conveys, cycling could provide great comfort:⁵³

Consolation

'Twas a sweet little maid, very daintily arrayed
 All a sobbing and sighing,
 And she lingered by the river 'neath a weeping-willow's shade
 As the purple day was dying.
 And "O! (cried she) and woe is me!
 And alas! for the vows forsworn -
 My happy day is done,
 And I'll go and be a nun,
 For my lover's false; and I am all forlorn."

"To the empty world I will bid farewell,
 Its follies I'll leave behind me;
 I'll hide my head in a convent cell
 Where none but death can find me -
 The phantom joys, the trifles and the toys,
 The tricks that make angels mourn -
 I remember them every one,
 And I'll go and be a nun,
 For my lover's false; and I am all forlorn."

Then she looked on the cycle that she loved so well,
 And she paused as in dawning doubt;
 "If once I get into that convent cell,
 I'm afraid they won't let me out;
 And I shouldn't like to give up my bike -
 I'd scout the idea with scorn -
 For cycling is such fun;
 No, I'll never be a nun,
 Though my lover's false, and I am all forlorn!" "

The ultimate assertion of women's independence, spinsterhood was often construed by satirists as an inevitable but positive development for women interested in cycling.

Active forms of recreation and sport continued to challenge conventional notions of feminine propriety as well as those about women's physical capabilities. Although the term 'New Woman' could represent laudable qualities of female independence, its pejorative use persisted in cycling magazines, both on and off the ladies' pages, as this extract illustrates:

52. NZW, 23 November 1898, 14.

53. NZW, 1 February 1899, 6.

Independence in women is not admired when it asserts itself by an objectionably loud manner or by aping the ways and appearance of men, in wearing an absurd travesty of their costume.⁵⁴

Masculine characteristics associated with the New Woman were clearly set as the limit beyond which female independence should not venture. Nevertheless, as women's position in society was transformed during the late-nineteenth century, the characteristics of the New Woman (including masculine ones) became less atypical; by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, large numbers of women were availing themselves of the new opportunities for higher education, to exercise their newly-won political rights, and to enter the workforce. The qualities of the New Woman, so radical in the early 1890s, had become somewhat orthodox by end of the nineteenth century.

Collective Representation

It was not until after the turn of the century, and when the bicycle had become widely affordable and utilised by all social classes, that a woman on a bicycle became an unconditionally accepted phenomenon. By the mid-1900s, the term 'New Woman' was all but obsolete, because all middle-class women could potentially act in self-determining ways, living out the characteristics and desires the New Woman had stood for twenty years previously. This transformation of gender roles, this new 'checklist' of femininity, represents what Goffman terms a 'collective representation' - a fact in its own right. By the beginning of World War One, the symbolism of the New Woman, as well as the literal presence of women on bicycles, had become a customary part of twentieth-century middle-class female culture. Feminine independence in all its guises heralded the arrival of a new era. The transition from the initial resistance to women's cycling, to conditional acceptance, and its eventual assimilation into mainstream society, was consistent with the broader social changes in the position of women in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth New Zealand, which I identified in Chapter 1 in the context of nineteenth-century modernity.

As a symbol of progress for both men and women, the bicycle represented the idea of freedom, independence, and the expansion of life experiences.⁵⁵ The enjoyment of physical exercise, fresh air, exploring new places and experiencing new sensations were themes regularly expressed in the ladies' pages of the cycling magazines from 1900 onwards:

54. NZW, 25 December 1901, 7.

55. Chris Rojek, *Ways of Escape: Modern Transformations in Leisure and Travel* (London: Macmillan, 1993), 102 ff.

The sensation of rapid motion originating wholly within yourself, is the most pleasurable I have ever felt. . . . it makes a new being of me. I am no longer a creature of the earth toiling slowly along its surface with the strictest limitations as to my rate of progress. My wheel lifts me above the earth and delivers me from the tyranny of it as to movement. It makes me a being of the air. I can swing this way and that. . . . I glow, I tingle, I become wholly vital. I can feel the day's weariness going out of me and a buoyancy of a new life power entering into me. No, I never can tell how much I owe to the bicycle.⁵⁶

Informal heterosocial encounters predominated by the turn of the century. Restrictions on the movement of bourgeois women in public gradually relaxed⁵⁷ so that, by the early-1900s, the solitary figure of a woman in public did not automatically signal promiscuity. By the early-twentieth century, many people felt that formality was no longer necessary nor desirable.⁵⁸ Women were no longer considered so vulnerable nor so dependent; furthermore, they were not just more confident in themselves, but now had realistic recourse to avenues of legal protection as a result of years of lobbying to change laws concerning their economic and social welfare.

Although conservative views of etiquette persisted into the early-twentieth century, they were usually maintained only by the social élite;⁵⁹ in most people's opinion, they were discounted as old-fashioned. In 1901, 'Theta' printed a parody of cycling etiquette which, by advising the opposite behaviour of what was hitherto considered *de rigueur*, signalled a significant departure from inflexible protocols, indicating that such practices were no longer taken seriously by most people.⁶⁰ It was in this context that New Zealand cycle journalists defended cyclists' relaxation of manners toward others in public settings as appropriate, albeit different, etiquette.⁶¹

The bicycle afforded women some choice about roles they wanted to play *vis-à-vis* men. To signal female emancipation, simply riding a bicycle might have been all that was required. To stage a well-timed fall or break-down gave an opportunity to switch the meaning entirely into

56. NZW, 29 May 1901, 4.

57. Rojek, 1993, 78-88.

58. Alla Atkinson, a descendant of the Atkinson and Richmond families, remarked despairingly, for example, upon the "strict adherence to *décolletée* for evening dress" at a Government House reception for the Duke and Duchess of York in 1901. Frances Porter and Charlotte Macdonald, *My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates: The Unsettled Lives of Women in Nineteenth-century New Zealand as Revealed to Sisters, Family and Friends* (Auckland: Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books, 1996), 150, 182.

59. Roberta Nicholls, "Élite Society in Victorian and Edwardian Wellington," In *The Making of Wellington, 1800-1914*, ed. David Hamer and Roberta Nicholls (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1990), 202; *Press*, 18 August 1900, 16; Rachel Stewart to Mary Stewart, 29 November 1899, 3 May 1900, in Downie Stewart Papers, Series 43 Box 156, Hocken Library - this reference was supplied by Jim McAloon.

60. NZW, 24 July 1901, 9.

61. NZW, 28 June 1902, 3.

an invitation for an encounter with the opposite sex. Such contrived actions played an important role in bringing together men and women in public. The increasing ability of women to choose which roles to play demonstrates their growing power to influence the definition of the situation, whether the desired outcome was admiration for their self-sufficiency or an agreement to romantic adventure. The function of formal etiquette as a protective device, both literally and figuratively, was less essential, for both sexes had begun to develop and practise new interpersonal skills that functioned just as well in the modern world. They were able to be more explicit and direct with each other, for example. Nevertheless, women did not exercise full agency in their actions. Safety on the streets or in mixed-sex company was not guaranteed. It was still imperative for women to know where it was safe to travel in the city, and to be able to recognise an undesirable companion, for example. In their expanding legitimate utilisation of public space, the presence of respectable women forced ill-reputed people and their activities underground, confining them much more narrowly. Respectable women knew to avoid these places and people. Signalling respectability necessarily continued to play a part in protecting women in public.⁶²

Conclusion

The introduction of cycling for women in the 1890s played a key part in the transformation of nineteenth-century gender roles. In New Zealand, as in other Western countries, the bicycle extended to women a number of exciting and novel opportunities which had significant ramifications for women's mobility, recreation, health, and their contact with the opposite sex. The bicycle offered women the chance to move beyond their customary confines; it gave women a highly accessible means of independent mobility which they exploited in work, education, recreation, and politics; it proved women capable of extended and intense physical activity; and it enabled women to informally meet and mix with males, independent of parental supervision. Collectively, this expansion acted as a catalyst for redefining respectable femininity.

Women's cycling in the 1890s was very much a part of wider social changes affecting women in the late-nineteenth century. During that decade, women were exposed to ever-

62. Signalling a gendered identity has endured to the present day. Speculation as to why this is so lies beyond the present research. In the late-nineteenth century, however, one explanation for the endurance of skirts for women might be that women who were clearly identifiable as females posed no threat to men on the streets. Moreover, they could easily be identified as potential victims for preying men. Women's explicit gendered identity was, at the same time, identifiable to chivalrous men, who could intervene if need be. This explanation of the endurance of skirts reinforces the dominance of the heterosexual romantic discourse.

increasing opportunities to participate more fully in society: in paid employment; in higher education; and in exercising their political rights. As they moved beyond their domestic confines, their public presence made a significant impact on society. The issues raised by women and cycling highlighted competing ideologies of femininity. By threatening the gender order, cycling in the late-nineteenth century was a politicised activity, however 'unpolitical' the motivation of individual cyclists. One must admire the fortitude of these cyclists who, in the face of strong opposition, successfully sustained their performance. This tenacity eventually transformed an aberrant behaviour into a collective representation of a re-defined femininity. As Goffman so eloquently puts it:

It is commonplace to say that different social groups express in different ways such attributes as age, sex, territory, and class status, and that in each case these bare attributes are elaborated by means of a distinctive complex cultural configuration of proper ways of conducting oneself. To *be* a given kind of person, then, is not merely to possess the required attributes, but also to sustain the standards of conduct and appearance that one's social groups attaches thereto.⁶³

The change of women's focus from the domestic to the public sphere, and the evolution of their role from passive to active citizens, occurred in the context of an overall transformation of Western culture in a modernising society. Modern life was indeed "ephemeral," as Baudelaire wrote.⁶⁴ Society, at all levels, was in a constant state of flux. Not only were social, economic and political processes changing, but so too were the phenomena of everyday life. As Simmel asserted, the stimulating experiences of the city offered "ways of escape" from the rigid demarcations between work and leisure time and space.⁶⁵ Women discovered with delight how cycling provided them with one means of escape: in a few minutes, one could be out of the city, cycling along the countryside, breathing the fresh air, listening to the birds and insects, and taking in the scenery, for example. The bicycle, along with other influences of modern life, became instrumental in transforming the prevailing gender order and gave prominence to emerging definitions of femininity.

Whether people considered cycling primarily as a pastime or as a means for getting around, its use as a vehicle was acknowledged to be the key to its continued popularity:

The bicycle has now settled down into an institution as necessary as any vehicle ever was, and has the added recommendation of affording a means of locomotion to thousands who, beyond an omnibus or cab, never went from place to place save on their feet.⁶⁶

63. Goffman, 1971, 81.

64. J. Mayne, ed., *The Painter of Modern Life' and Other Essays* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1964),

13.

65. Rojek, 1993, 101-3.

66. *NZC*, 2 July 1898, 9.

Cycling continued to increase in popularity well into the twentieth century. The exclusivity of the bicycle for the well-to-do quickly waned as ordinary citizens adopted the bicycle for transport as well as for recreation.⁶⁷ The *New Zealand Wheelman* observed in late 1901 that

more cycles were being ridden now than at any previous time, and at a rate that is very satisfactory to all who are appreciative of the numerous advantages derived from the wheel as a light, speedy and comparatively inexpensive vehicle adapted to many practical uses.⁶⁸

* * * * *

This examination of women's cycling in late-nineteenth century New Zealand contributes to our historical understanding in three important ways: it has uncovered primary material about an activity which, until now, has lain dormant. This research has also augmented the body of knowledge about nineteenth-century New Zealand women's experiences: their sport and recreation, their foray into public space, and their interactions with the opposite sex in those contexts. Finally, this thesis has advanced explanations which contribute to our understanding of the meaning of women's experiences which centred around cycling.

The argument presented in this project is embryonic. An in-depth study of one recreational activity has yielded much rich information about women's lives in nineteenth-century New Zealand. Nevertheless, little is known about the mobility of women in urban public spaces, and women's sport and recreation experiences in general. We also know little about the everyday life experiences and aspirations of middle-class women in New Zealand: how they coped with the demands and constraints of propriety, what they would have preferred to do with their time, how they would have preferred to behave. Despite the increasing recovery of biographical information about women in New Zealand, our understanding of the complexities of nineteenth-century social life in this country would be greatly enhanced by being able to uncover more. I was able to trace information about very few of the women mentioned in the New Zealand cycling magazines. With more biographical and other relevant information, I might have been able to better connect these women at a social level, and to more accurately determine the nature and extent of the agency of women in the wider functions of society. Nevertheless, we can infer that women from all social classes did play active roles in public life, even though we know that these roles were often not transparent to their contemporaries, just as they remain largely hidden to present-day historians. Given the profoundly interdependent nature of female and male relationships of the nineteenth century, there can be no other

67. NZW, 30 August 1899, 5; 26 June 1901, 3; 18 September 1901, 7.

68. NZW, 18 September 1901, 7.

conclusion than that women were partners, at least, in the shaping of New Zealand culture. Women on bicycles played a significant role in the shaping of that culture, by successfully challenging prevailing beliefs about femininity as an immutable set of innate characteristics. Because they required different apparel, their spontaneity afforded sociability, the activity made them conspicuous and helped women to colonise public space, women on bicycles were a highly visible, everyday symbol of the realities of modern life that challenged traditional gender roles and nineteenth-century formality:

It is said that for a woman the bicycle is fun, medicine, business and emancipation, all blended into one.⁶⁹

69. *NZW*, 28 December 1898, 9.

APPENDIX

NEW ZEALAND CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB

The structure and prospectus of the New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club (NZCTC) emulated the Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC) of England, appointing consuls throughout the country to assist members in their cycle touring plans and journeys, and to further publicise the club. The NZCTC acted on behalf of members involved in legal wrangles, and lobbied councils and government on issues that concerned cyclists, such as road conditions and rules.

By March 1897, the club had amassed 740 members, more than its English counterpart had totalled in its first year, but according to James McGurn, the English CTC membership numbers were: 1879 - 836; 1886 - 22,316.¹ The fact that the New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club attracted so many members is probably because, by the time it was founded in 1896, cycling was already very popular, and cannot therefore be sensibly compared to the first year of the English CTC, which was founded in 1878. The New Zealand Cyclists' Alliance, the precursor to the NZCTC, appointed consuls in every district of the Colony. The duties of these officers consisted of promoting touring, reporting on the state of the roads, recommending to members the best hotels, and looking after the interests of cyclists generally: "In fact they will do for cyclists all that the Cooks do for tourists, and more besides."² 'Cooks' probably refers to the travel company, Thomas Cook and sons.

In addition to the information the NZCTC disseminated, it also erected signs pointing out dangerous parts of roads; the first "danger board" was erected at the top of the Rimutaka range, between Wellington and Featherston, in 1898.³

The NZCTC played an instrumental role in producing for sale their own cycling maps, and obtaining for re-sale from the Lands Department their series of tourist guide books.⁴

New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Riding Regulations⁵

1. Members should keep as much as possible to the left, or near side of the road.
2. It is illegal to ride on any path set aside for foot passengers, and this practice should be entirely avoided.
3. The Rules of the Road should be most strictly followed out. Thus -
 In meeting keep to the left
 In overtaking pass on the right
 But led horses must always be met and passed on the side on which the man in charge is.
4. Before passing a vehicle or foot passenger, notice should be given at sufficient distance by whistle, bell, or otherwise.
5. Never pass between two vehicles or riders when overtaking them.

1. James McGurn, *On Your Bicycle: An Illustrated History of Cycling* (London: John Murray, 1987), 60.

2. *New Zealand Wheelman*, 5 November, 1892, 6.

3. *New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, 1 April, 1898, 83.

4. 15 November 1899, At this time, the club was planning its own road book specifically for cyclists' use. The maps published by the club were extremely popular, the Canterbury ones in most demand. *NZCTCG*, 15 November 1899, 50.

5. *NZCTCG*, 1 November 1896, 24.

6. If any rider or vehicle wishes to pass you, keep well over to the left.
7. Special care should be taken in turning corners, especially where a full view of the road is not obtainable.
8. Riders are advised to retain perfect control of their machines when riding down unknown and dangerous hills, and to dismount on approaching any descent which cannot be seen to be clear to the bottom.
9. In meeting or passing restive horses, a dismount should only be made *if requested* by the driver holding up his hand or otherwise, as sudden dismounts often have the worst effect. A slow pace, and a few words, form the best course. The rider should always keep as far away from the horse as possible.
10. Riders should not take the ground in front of a horse until at least ten yards ahead.
11. It is considered advisable to avoid, as much as possible, the use of the voice when passing foot passengers or vehicles.
12. A lighted lamp should always be carried between the hours of sunset and sunrise.

Principal Objects of the New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club⁶

1. To encourage and facilitate touring in all parts of the colony.
2. To provide riding and touring companions.
3. To protect its members against any infringement of the rights and privileges to which they are entitled, and to extend those rights and privileges wherever possible.
4. To secure and appoint upon special terms and at reduced rates, hotels and accommodation houses in all parts of the country.
5. To appoint a Consul, wherever possible, who shall render to his fellow-members local information germane to the pastime, unobtainable from other sources.
6. To similarly appoint Official Repairers, competent to remedy breakages and defects in machines.
7. To publish monthly an 'Official Gazette,' to be supplied gratis to members only.
8. To compile and issue to members at reduced prices, Maps and Road Books especially adapted to the requirement of the Cyclist.
9. To inculcate and encourage an *esprit de corps* in the brotherhood of the wheel, and to uphold and promote the true interests of cycling throughout New Zealand.

Additional Objectives of the New Zealand Cyclists' Touring Club

1. Reducing charges for the transit of cycles by passenger train, as well as securing special concessions in the way of reducing rates for both machine and rider.
2. Removing all unreasonable restrictions upon the use of public parks by cyclists.
3. Abolishing the conflicting and anomalous county and borough by-laws, and substituting therefore a statute law declaring cycles to be carriages within the meaning of the Act, and entitling them to all the privileges and benefits applicable to other carriages.
4. Upholding and improving the status of the wheelman by condemning furious riding and every other practice likely to bring the cyclist into disrepute with other users of the roads and the community at large.
5. Supplying, erecting, and maintaining warning notices on dangerous hills.
6. Compiling reliable Road Books.
7. Watching and opposing all measures restrictive of cycling introduced into Parliament or by local authorities.

6. "Application for membership," Pamphlet inside NZCTCG, November 1896.

8. Agitating in favour of, and introducing into Parliament, a measure compelling all vehicles to carry lights at night, and co-operating with County and Borough Councils in dealing with the matter by means of by-laws in their own particular districts.
9. Inducing hotel proprietors and other public caterers to study the special requirements of the wheelman, and to deal with him in a generous spirit.
10. Perfecting the dress of the cyclist, and providing an ideal outfit for the use of each sex.
11. Obtaining the more efficient supervision and maintenance of the roads throughout the colony.

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New Zealand Cyclist
New Zealand Cyclists' and Touring Club Gazette
New Zealand Graphic and Ladies' Journal
New Zealand Illustrated Magazine
New Zealand Mail
New Zealand Medical Journal
New Zealand Wheelman
Otago Daily Times
Otago Witness
Press
Southern Cross
Southern Queen
Southern Standard
White Ribbon

Overseas Publications

Arena
At the Sign of the Butterfly
Bicycling News
Bicycling News and Tricycling Gazette, Sport and Play
Bicycling News and Sport and Play
British Medical Journal
Cornhill Magazine
Country Life
Cycle
Cycle Magazine
Cycle Record: Athletic Review and Diary
Cycle Touring Club Gazette
Cycling
Cycling World Illustrated
Cyclist
Fortnightly Review
Fraser's Magazine
Gentleman's Magazine
Girl's Own Paper
Household Words: A Weekly Journal

Hub
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Longman's Magazine
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Pearson's Athletic Record
Rational Dress Society's Gazette
Southern Counties Cycling Union Gazette
Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review
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Wheel World: Bicycling and Tricycling Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Sport
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