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Abstract

In March 1975, Wisconsin Senator William Proxmire awarded his first Golden Fleece Award to Elaine Hatfield and Ellen Berscheid because the National Science Foundation (NSF) awarded them $84,000 to study love research. Carried on monthly for fifteen straight years, the Golden Fleece Award became synonymous with government waste, amusing scientific research, and outlandish public works projects. The Golden Fleece Award impacted how the NSF reviewed projects, allocated funding, and publicized research.

Chapter one provides a historiographical review of the 1970s and focuses on social tensions, especially those between men and women. Largely the product of activism by the women’s movement, issues previously limited to the personal sphere such as reproductive agency, domestic violence, and a lack of educational and employment opportunities for women became part of the mainstream political discussion.

Biographical accounts of William Proxmire and Elaine Hatfield from primary sources comprise chapters two and three. The final two chapters look at four daily newspapers, The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, The Capital Times (Madison, WI), and the Chicago Tribune, in order to provide a more nuanced understanding of the daily news coverage of the mid-1970s. These close readings address how issues about relationships between men and women were a constant feature and informed the public debate surrounding the first Golden Fleece Award.

The overarching argument of this work is that the dramatic economic, political, and social changes of the 1970s were regularly interpreted through the lens of men and
women’s relationships. Disputes between men and women--personal and professional--were a constant theme of newspaper coverage in the mid-1970s. There was a palpable tension between men and women’s public, private, and political relationships that informed how news was selected and presented to the public. This dynamic informed the cultural debate over the first Golden Fleece Award.

The conclusion addresses the long-term impact of the Golden Fleece Award on the careers of Elaine Hatfield and William Proxmire and discusses public funding of scientific research.
Introduction

The Personal and Professional Are Political

My choice for the biggest waste of taxpayer money for the month of March was the National Science Foundation’s squandering of $84,000 trying to identify why people fall in love.

I object to this not only because no one—not even the National Science Foundation—can argue that falling in love is a science; not only because I’m sure that whether NSF spends $84 million or $84 billion, they won’t get an answer that anyone would believe, but I’m against it also because I don’t want the answer.

I believe that 200 million other Americans want to leave some elements of life a mystery, and right at the top of the things that we don’t want to know is why a man falls in love with a woman and vice versa.

So National Science Foundation—get out of the love racket. Leave such a task to Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Irving Berlin. If there is anywhere Alexander Pope was right, it was when he observed, ‘If ignorance is bliss, tis folly to be wise.’

--Press release March 11, 1975 from Senator William Proxmire (D) Wisconsin

In March 1975, Wisconsin Senator William Proxmire issued the press release quoted above that criticized the federal government for spending $84,000 on “love” research. A liberal Democrat with a graduate degree in accounting, Proxmire was a long-time critic of wasteful government spending. Throughout his career in the United States Senate, he had published many works on the subject of government spending, including Report from Wasteland: America’s Military-Industrial Complex (1970), Uncle Sam--The Last of the Bigtime Spenders (1972), and Can Congress Control Spending? (1973). By the mid-1970s, he was widely considered an expert on economic issues and was regularly quoted in the media for guidance on a variety of economic issues. In January 1975, Proxmire inherited the chairmanship of the powerful Banking Committee.

Proxmire’s satirical attack on the National Science Foundation for squandering “$84,000 trying to find out why people fall in love” was immediately controversial.¹ The

grant recipients—Professors Elaine Hatfield and Ellen Berscheid—defended their research in newspaper interviews. Nationally syndicated writer James Reston addressed the topic directly in his column, and a wide variety of newspapers published letters to the editor from constituents and scientists weighing in on both sides of the issue. Proxmire, an avid debater, penned a lengthy response to Reston, justifying his first Golden Fleece Award by quoting directly from the scientists’ original grant proposal.

With a federal budget in the hundreds of billions, $84,000 was a relatively minimal expense, and on its own would not have warranted national debate. American attitudes towards sex, marriage, and all intimate relationships were central to cultural debates of the mid-1970s and thus Proxmire’s first Golden Fleece Award proved controversial because it touched upon these debates. The research conducted by two female psychologists and the defamation of their work by a United States senator reaffirmed that debates between men and women were of central importance to the nation in the mid-1970s.

The controversy expressed several interrelated tensions within American culture. These included fears surrounding the changing roles of women and the apparent disintegration of the two parent family unit, a lack of public trust of the government in a post-Watergate/Vietnam era, and a national recession. Countless other issues either directly or indirectly involved men and women’s disputes, from abortion and child welfare to environmental protection and national security. This dissertation will show how the contested terrain of men and women’s roles, rights, and responsibilities formed the subtext for many other debates.
As women gained new employment opportunities as well as educational and biological rights, the structure of the family, the workforce, and the economy were simultaneously transforming. A restructuring of the family unit took place in tandem: the divorce rate doubled between 1966 and 1976, and the number of working mothers with small children skyrocketed. The percentage of employed women with children younger than six years of age increased from thirty percent in 1970 to forty-three percent in 1976. This trend continued so that half of all women with young children were working by 1985. Federally funded experiments on how or why people fell in love aligned with the ongoing controversy involving family, fiscal responsibility, and government accountability.

In the mid-1970s, there were visible tensions between men and women chiefly regarding the latter's rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in America. The nation’s newspapers featured articles debating the legal, economic, educational, athletic, and biological rights of women on a daily basis. High profile events, such as the nationally televised “The Battle of the Sexes” tennis match in 1973 between the current women’s champion Billie Jean King and a former men’s champion, Bobby Riggs, expressed Americans’ obsession with the conflicts between men and women. During a time of economic contraction, a challenging job market, and limited public funds, Americans debated how to provide women equal access to resources and how to protect them under the law. Private relationships between men and women were also hotly contested. The

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sexual revolution had entered mainstream popular culture, making sex a common conversation topic.

In addition to developing tensions between men and women, there were also debates amongst women and men themselves, respectively. For example, while the Women’s Liberation movement debated what liberation meant and its general purpose, other women formed anti-liberation organizations and condemned the movement. Many men were not satisfied with their role as an overworked provider who was expected to sacrifice personal happiness for professional success. Thus, the liberation movement also inspired some men to see that they too needed liberation from constricting gender roles. The fact that both men and women needed liberation from the boundaries of gender roles had become part of public discourse to a limited degree, but was seldom the center of a debate that usually focused on the battle between men and women.

Cultural values of the mid-1970s constrained the discussion of men and women’s roles, rights, and responsibilities in American society. For the most part, dominant values limited the discourse to an antagonistic dispute between men and women, presenting them in stereotypical terms that reinforced their respective genders, while teasing out themes of love and sex. Men and women were often presented as adversaries in battles over jobs, education, and legal rights. In a period of limited if not outright diminishing resources, it was commonly believed that men and women were in direct competition.

In order to clarify the public debate between men and women in the mid-1970s, it is necessary to define “gender.” In current usage “gender” not only refers to the differences between men and women, but can also express a wide variety of sexual
orientations and expressions including but not limited to transgendered, homosexual, and heterosexual. In the mid-1970s, national debates primarily included themes of men versus women. Discussions addressing liberation amongst women and men themselves from restrictive gender roles were infrequent. The public discourse, especially found in popular media, very seldom addressed a nuanced understanding of gender as fluid and defined by the individual. For these reasons, I refer to the gender debates that took place in the mid-1970s most often as “debates about the relationships between men and women.” This phrase clearly expresses how at that time in America gender was overwhelmingly accepted as binary, whereas “gender issues” or “gender debates” may lead the reader to think of the variety of gender expressions.

In the mid-1970s, interpreting gender as binary was only one of many stark divisions that characterized American cultural debates. Americans were concerned with a number of major issues, including the economy, the energy crisis, environmental protection, in addition to the public and private roles of men and women. Throughout the decade women made significant social, legal, and economic gains. However, there was a downside to progress. Many Americans believed that women’s advancement was costing men their jobs. For centuries, female participation in the workforce had been limited by a variety of barriers that denied women access to educational opportunities, financial agency, family planning practices, and legal equality. Throughout the 1970s women made significant gains in these areas, but it appeared to many that women advanced at the expense of men. In fact, women were merely gaining, albeit slowly, the same rights and privileges that had previously been reserved exclusively for men.
The roles of women and the larger transformations of the American family were also affected by much larger shifts of resources, labor, capital, and production in the global economy. The migration of manufacturing from first world nations to developing nations where labor and resources were less expensive impacted domestic gain. A large-scale decline in well-paying blue-collar jobs resulted in fewer jobs. Progress towards legal and economic parity, plus mainstream Americans’ embrace of liberal lifestyles combined with outsourcing created rapid social and economic change. Rather than linking the issues surrounding social changes with their economic causes, many Americans associated—while others outright blamed—the disintegration of the American family with women’s educational, employment, biological, and legal advances.

Reflecting the harsh realities of a contracting economy, conflict over rights and resources reigned supreme, and progressive social movements were often blamed for personal to national problems. For example, women’s liberation helped level the playing field but was not responsible for the recession, energy crisis, or loss in manufacturing jobs. Historian Beth Bailey describes these tensions:

Looking back to the 1970s, it is striking how very hard the struggles over change were, how angry and ugly and confused the public culture was, as Americans debated the transformation of American life. [...] The 1970s were an era of new freedoms and opportunities for many Americans—women, people of color—but

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3 Industrial manufacturing underwent restructuring in the 1970s, moving labor and production from America and other wealthy nations to more impoverished nations where manufacturing could take place for significantly lower prices. According to Ronald Cox and Daniel Skidmore-Hess in their text, _United States Politics and Global Economy: Corporate Power, Conservative Shift_, “From 1970 to 1984, U.S. based transnationals dramatically increased their investments in plants and equipment in Latin America.” The authors go on to explain that when U.S. auto firms faced increased global competition, they worked to reduce labor and supply costs in order to prevent a further loss of their domestic market share. The most notable aspect of these policies was the relocation of American manufacturing abroad, and the resulting impact upon American’s domestic laborers. See: Ronald Cox and Daniel Skidmore-Hess, _United States Politics and the Global Economy: Corporate Power, Conservative Shift_ (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 190-192.
at the same time, they were the years in which Americans confronted a future that no longer seemed limitless.”

Confronting a present recession while anticipating a future of diminishing returns caused many to place blame upon the progressive legal, cultural, and legislative policies of the era.

The conservative response to social change and economic problems was widespread. It was not only concerned with women competing for men’s jobs, but equated such changes with a disruption of heterosexual intercourse. For some, the journey towards gender equality would eventually--if it had not already--upset the sexual balance between men and women. Women’s liberation was so controversial because its implications were not limited to sports fields or the board room. Bailey explains that

For many Americans, the crux of the problem was that liberation freed women to compete with men and, in so doing, upset what they believed was the proper relationship between the sexes. Discussions about liberation, pro and con, were usually focused on women and their changing roles. But as the decade wore on, people were increasingly concerned not only about women but about women, men, and the relationship between the sexes. In these debates, competition was a key issue... [even] in the bedroom.

By the end of the 1970s the expanding gender discussion impacted men and women, but in the mid-1970s it was largely focused upon portraying women and men at odds with and in conflict with each other.

The tensions between the sexes became a subtext if not an overt issue within many national and local topics. Sex was commonly addressed in print media and on broadcast television. Teasing out themes of gender conflict and sexual innuendo was fairly common. Particularly within print media, everything from access to jobs and

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5 Ibid., 119-120.
participation in sports to marital problems and changing family situations were often presented as a struggle between men and women. Stories that featured male and female protagonists, covered interpersonal dramas, or that addressed rape were regularly spun to feature men versus women.

In order to provide a more thorough understanding of American culture in the mid-1970s, chapter one begins with a review of the salient events of the first half of the 1970s and concludes with an analysis of scholarly interpretations of the period. The chapter seeks to flesh out how daily life and expectations changed for many Americans and also how and why the period was rife with conflicts and distrust of large institutions. Access to opportunities and resources broadened throughout the 1970s, providing power to once disenfranchised populations. Empowerment came through a number of media that included the judicial system, educational opportunities, and a public discourse that addressed personal and professional issues as politically relevant. An especially important expression of women's empowerment came through changes in language.

New terms and phrases expressed deep amendments in cultural values, legal definitions, and the public understanding of men and women's relationships. Language was quickly evolving in the 1970s, reflecting women's changing roles and the mediation of conflicts between men and women. “Ms.,” “affirmative action,” “sexual harassment,” “battery,” “domestic violence,” and “companionate love”--all entered the public discourse. The growth in linguistic expressions also included redefining existing terms and both signaled real transformations within power structures. For example, the Supreme Court ruled in 1977 that the term “family” henceforth applied to any two people
living together. Whether people were related or married no longer determined their familial status. This legal definition opened the door for any type of relationship to be eligible for government services and protection under the law. Widespread use of the term “domestic violence” and the associated legal revisions that applied stronger enforcement mechanisms against it by the mid-1970s immediately increased the physical well being of women. But common use and familiarity with the term also signaled an opportunity for all members of society to address the issue of violence with the family unit.

As Joan Wallach Scott states in Gender and the Politics of History (1999), “Through language, gender identity is constructed.” Men and women’s relationships are largely defined by and understood through a language burdened with cultural assumptions and values. The expansion of language with new terms, phrases, and by establishing new legal definitions roots out these assumptions and helps address sexist practices and therefore can be very controversial. Scott conveys how at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, simply defining the term “gender” to reflect current use became a heated issue and proved an impossible task. This difficulty inspired her to insert gender into the politics of history in order “to realize the goal of

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7 “Domestic violence” was coined by Jack Ashley a Member of Parliament in an address to the House of Commons on July 16, 1973. The speech is available at http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1973/jul/16/battered-wives [Accessed October 25, 2012]. The term was soon used in the United States to discuss violence perpetuated against women within intimate relationships. By the mid-1970s many states revised their statutes on domestic violence to increase penalties, require more detailed reports of police and/or prosecutors, mandate arrest, or increase arrest powers. See Samuel Walker, Taming the System: The Control of Discretion in Criminal Justice, 1950-1990 (Oxford University Press: New York, 1993), 36.

8 Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 38.
historians of women in the 1970s: to bring women from the margins to the center of historical focus and, in the process, transform the way all history was written.” Changes in language and access to scientific knowledge are evidence of legal, economic, and social empowerment for both men and women and help to place women at the center of 1970s history.

Having established a scholarly and historical context in chapter one, chapters two and three present the lives and professional careers of Senator William Proxmire and Professor Elaine Hatfield. Because no such work currently exists, these two biographical chapters offer groundbreaking views of the personal and public lives of two important figures. Both were leaders within their respective fields. Proxmire helped focus the nation on fiscal responsibility and Hatfield brought scientific information about intimate relationships to the public discussion of men and women’s personal relationships. Aside from an unprofessional biography of Proxmire that was published in 1972, at present there is not a biography on either figure. Thus, these chapters are a first step at filling that historical void.

The instigator of the “love” research debate, Proxmire was already a household name in the early 1970s for championing fiscal responsibility on a wide variety of topics from military waste to NASA’s huge budget. While engaged in issues of national controversy, Proxmire remained extremely popular in his home state, repeatedly winning re-election by a wide margin, including seventy-one percent of the vote in 1970, seventy-three percent in 1976, and sixty-four percent in 1982 when re-elected for his fifth full

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9 Ibid., iii-xi.
The Golden Fleece Award that began in March of 1975 was issued monthly for fourteen straight years. The progressive electorate of Wisconsin re-elected Proxmire, and as a constituency that seldom followed national trends, this allowed Proxmire to set his own agenda.

By emphatically stating that no one wanted to know how romance functioned, Proxmire, in awarding his first Golden Fleece Award, supported the widely accepted view that men and women’s gender was dichotomous. His word choice reinforced the common belief that a proper balance existed between the sexes and that it could easily be disrupted. By arguing that love should remain a mystery, Proxmire took the conservative stance that knowledge should be limited. Although such a position was decidedly uncharacteristic of Proxmire, who held a masters degree in finance and nearly completed a Ph.D. in political science, the language he chose fit neatly into the ongoing debates about men and women’s roles, and especially the discussion of intimate behavior: sex.

Was a mysterious force responsible for romance and could dissecting it scientifically further unravel the marriage bond? Following the biographical treatment of Proxmire in chapter two, chapter three presents the career of Professor Elaine Hatfield and explores the available research showing how the often contradictory and illogical aspects of romantic love could be addressed scientifically. Love did not need to remain a total mystery.

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Chapter three examines professor Elaine Hatfield’s professional career, and illustrates the professional barriers that women faced in the field of psychology since its American inception in the late 1900s and how Hatfield navigated those issues leading up to and following her receipt of the Golden Fleece Award. The “award” was personally and professionally trying for Elaine Hatfield and her research associate Ellen Berscheid. Both were inundated with critical mail, received physical threats, and were thereafter denied funding from the National Science Foundation. It proved especially difficult on Professor Berscheid, who continues to believe that her award contributed to the loss of her marriage, dog, and car, and that it damaged her professional career.\textsuperscript{12} Remaining a sensitive subject for professor Berscheid, her privacy was respected and she was not included in this study.

Professor Hatfield weathered the crisis with more of her life intact. In the summer of 1975 she and her husband were featured in \textit{People Magazine}. Her professional and private life were splashed across the pages of a leading national publication. It showed her husband eating in bed, the couple playing squash, and working with graduate students. It was an uncanny and misleading view into her personal life. Much of Hatfield’s original research was inspired by her personal and professional problems. In college and graduate school she has declared herself “clueless” about men and dating, and thus began her innovative studies of date selection. In the early 1960s as a young professional she faced the harsh realities of a sexist academia and was initially denied a position as professor. This experience inspired her to study the affects of race and gender.

on college admissions and then upon academic hiring practices in the early 1970s. For Hatfield, both personal and professional issues were interwoven with the politics of 1970s America and guided her research.

In 1978 Hatfield turned the unsolicited publicity from the golden Fleece Award into a successful national book and interview tour. Hatfield’s response to the Golden Fleece Award established her as the public expert in the field of interpersonal attraction, and led her and Berscheid to coin the term “companionate love.” The term addressed an important aspect of men and women’s relationship problems: how relationships change over time. Companionate love explained the common processes by which the passionate love that motivates a relationship at the beginning mellowed over time and became a warm, stable bond. Hatfield explained in her 1978 book *A New Look at Love* and in other public forums that the belief that passionate love can last forever is just plain wrong. According to Hatfield, dominant cultural depictions of love contribute to unrealistic expectations and factored into the high divorce rate of the period. Instead, if married couples were aware of the common emotional changes in long-term relationships—from passionate to companionate love—perhaps fewer would have sought divorce.¹³

Beginning in 1970 and lasting through the late 1980s, Hatfield’s substantive curriculum vitae of original research established her as the most cited social psychologist in America.¹⁴ In addition to her scholarly work, she has often been interviewed by

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mainstream media—from *Time Magazine* to *The New York Times*—as an expert on love.\(^\text{15}\) In 2012 the Association for Psychological Science (APS) presented her with the William James Fellow Award for a lifetime of “significant intellectual contributions to the basic science of psychology.”\(^\text{16}\) According to her peers, the APS professional organization, and the media, Hatfield has had a profound impact upon the field of psychology and the public’s understanding of love.

The final two chapters develop a more nuanced perspective and on the ground feel regarding the debates about the relationships between men and women in the mid-1970s by providing detailed readings of the daily coverage of four newspapers. With a focus on the first half of 1975, chapters four and five will show that many issues were couched in themes of love and sex, packaged within stereotyped genders, and at times presented men and women at odds. A day-by-day review of the debate surrounding the first Golden Fleece Award fleshes out these chapters. Newspapers from the mid-1970s addressed men and women’s issues with coverage that varied from a progressive exploration of larger cultural changes to a simple reinforcement of sexist values. Perspectives varied from the rare call for men and women’s mutual liberation to a backlash against women and the Women’s Movement. The newspaper coverage of the first Golden Fleece Award in March 1975 reveals how the nation at large and the


individual participants expressed their opinions and debated fiscal accountability, governmental responsibility, and gender issues.

This study seeks to better understand the widespread cultural change of the era by unpacking debates between men and women in the mid-1970s. Romantic, professional, and economic relationships were debated each day. Significant attention is given to the newspapers’ context, including advertising, articles, and formatting. The topography of a printed paper is a layered expression of value judgments. What comes first, what includes pictures, and what is displayed in larger font titles are all explicitly delineated as more important than short articles placed in the back of sections that share page space with advertising. Furthermore, examining the style of the writing and photographs displayed informs how a topic is managed and at times molded into dominant cultural issues and values. Detailed readings of the Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, The Chicago Tribune, and The Capital Times (Madison, WI) illuminates how men and women’s roles were interpreted, understood and debated in the mid-1970s.

Newspapers provided a rich depiction of what concerned Americans each day and were an important medium for public debates before the internet. Issues were also debated on broadcast television, but the accessibility of newspapers and the fewer layers of nuanced meaning on black and white printed page made newspapers the preferred resource. While weekly or monthly magazines provided in-depth coverage of events and published readers’ letters, daily newspaper did the same, but at a faster pace. Daily newspapers often printed arguments from several different parties in a single week. Of all the mainstream print media sources available in the mid-1970s, daily papers provided
copious coverage of important debates, including coverage of the first Golden Fleece Award, opinions from their editorial boards, letters from constituents and personal responses from the debate's participants.

However, newspaper content was not a neutral reflection of reality, thus its content must be carefully interpreted. Along with constituent and editorial preferences, it also expressed values that advertisers found acceptable. It was common practice for the media to belittle women through a number of tactics that included gender stereotyping, irreverence about their concerns, focusing on the victims of crimes rather than the perpetrators, outright absence of coverage, and sexual and or romantic innuendo. All aspects of news presentation—placement, boldness of titles, and photographs—conveyed “knowledge” that reaffirmed or expanded public understanding of existing power structures. As historian Lisa Duggan explains,

The given organization of knowledge in newspapers and classrooms is neither neutral nor necessary.... What counts as “politics” in a newspaper or a classroom? What languages are assumed, taught, forbidden? What parts of the world are privileged as topics and what parts marginalized? Which races, ethnicities, genders and sexualities are assumed, and which designated?17

Analyzing newspaper coverage further reveals how “knowledge” to the general public is also restricted. Duggan addresses the “containment of knowledge” in her 2000 book *Sapphic Slashers*, connecting the newspaper coverage of a lesbian love crime at the turn of the twentieth century with women’s aspirations for political equality, economic autonomy, and alternative domesticities.18 Duggan argues that the lesbian sex crime narrative portrayed romance between women as dangerous, insane, and violent, and

18 Ibid., 1-8.
thereby helped to marginalize the aspirations of women. While the time and place are drastically different, “Fleecing the Science of Love” addresses the construction of women’s identities in the mid-1970s, and shows how even in serious professional settings they were most often characterized within a limited sphere of female stereotypes. Mainstream news coverage of women was severely contained by traditional gender roles that accepted women primarily as mothers, wives, and sexual objects. While depictions of women evolved fast in the mid-1970s—witnessed by changes in language in print media and sexual expression on television—gendered depictions of women, for the most part, reigned supreme in 1975.

The conclusion of this study looks at the impact of the Golden Fleece Award on the funding for scientific research and the career of Elaine Hatfield and William Proxmire. Conflicts between Senator Proxmire and scientists significantly altered the role of congressional oversight. The Golden Fleece Award changed how the National Science Foundation (NSF) reviewed projects, allocated funding, and publicized research. Along with later debates, the Golden Fleece also impacted how the American Psychological Association (APA) functions. The NSF and the APA learned how to mitigate controversy in advance by changing the titles of potentially controversial research projects and the NSF by specifically asking Professor Hatfield to wait a very long time before applying for future funding. Avoiding controversy was the best tactic for a small federal agency whose beneficiaries—scientists—lacked a broad base of public support.

Issued monthly for fifteen consecutive years until the end of Proxmire’s fifth consecutive Congressional term in 1989, the Golden Fleece Award became synonymous
with government waste, amusing scientific research, and outlandish public works projects. Many fiscally conservative groups currently use the name “Golden Fleece” in order to address a wasteful government, including Common Sense for Oregon, the Pacific Research Institute, and the San Diego Taxpayers Association. At the behest of Senator Proxmire, the award was officially revived in 2000 by a national organization—Taxpayers for Common Sense—to commemorate the award's twenty-fifth anniversary.

In addition to providing a historical overview of the 1970s, chapter one focuses much of its attention on the Women’s Movement and the debates about the relationships between men and women. As already stated, gender issues were such a salient aspect of American culture in the mid-1970s that they percolated into discussions of many other issues. During a period of economic limits, progressive programs, such as those that empowered women and other disenfranchised groups, proved especially controversial. Any changes in the rights, responsibilities, and roles of women proved newsworthy and contentious, and revealed palpable progress toward gender equality.

For example, increased knowledge of female biological functions was pressed for by activists, and following many gatherings (including the first Women’s Health Conference), Our Bodies, Ourselves was published in 1971. With birth control regularly prescribed by 1970 and the eruption of new types of living situations and romantic relationships, women’s reproductive knowledge was increasingly important to their well being. Our Bodies, Ourselves was an important medium through which women were able

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19 There were historical “Golden Fleeces” such as the one featured in the quest by Jason and the Argonauts for the fleece of a winged and gold-haired ram in Greek mythology, but Proxmire’s came from the most common definition of the word. When used as a verb, to fleece means to deprive of money or belongings by fraud, hoax, or swindle. It can mean the removal of the fleece of a sheep, and it can also be used to describe the overspreading of an idea or object, such as a host of clouds fleecing the summer sky.
to take control of their bodies away from the male dominated medical establishment by empowering themselves with accessible knowledge. Similarly, knowledge of interpersonal relationships, including how and why people fall in and out of love, was also necessary to women’s empowerment. Chapter three will explore Professor Hatfield’s contribution to men and women’s understanding of their romantic behaviors and emotions.

The overarching theme of this work is that the conflicts that men and women faced in their personal and professional lives became part of legislative action, public policy, and judicial rulings in the 1970s. When combined with the ongoing sexual revolution, the result was that Americans’ customs, habits, and laws became more liberalized. Permanent reorganizations within American culture—especially those between between men and women—resulted in significant tensions. Americans expressed their apprehensions regarding these changes by debating the roles, rights, and responsibilities of men and women. While political issues such as Title IX and the Equal Rights Amendment were reported on and argued about in daily newspapers, a less obvious debate about men and women’s personal relationships was also carried out. The American media was preoccupied with topics that involved love and sex, and were fond of teasing out these themes even when they were not central to the story. The printed news coverage linked Proxmire’s marriage issues with the research that he attacked, thereby linking his personal life to his political positions. Foremost, the Golden Fleece for love research was newsworthy because a man purported not to want to know about love, while a woman argued for the potential benefits of answers about love. It also drew
attention because it involved the fiscal responsibility of the federal government, but Proxmire attacked dozens of federal expenditures in 1975 and none drew the same volume of public and professional responses.
Chapter 1

Love and Politics in the 1970s: A Gendered History of the “Me Decade”

Those who recently dreamed of world power despair of governing the city of New York. Defeat in Vietnam, economic stagnation, and the impeding exhaustion of natural resources have produced a mood of pessimism in higher circles, which spreads through the rest of society as people lose faith in their leaders.”


[W]omen could be aggressive sexual agents while dressed in sweet, feminine dresses; men could be fashionable peacocks who still adhered to misogynist ideas of male sexual privilege; and a slew of options in between.”


**Introduction: Debating Gender**

In the 1970s, Americans' cultural and political options diversified. Liberal lifestyles and activities, many of which had been shunned if not explicitly illegal in previous decades, became commonplace. Simultaneously, by the end of the decade the political landscape became much more conservative, the result of a backlash from blue-collar workers and a vocal Religious Right. This chapter begins with an overview of some of the events and trends that shaped the political and cultural environment through the mid-1970s in order to establish the tenor of a prevalent ethos. This national atmosphere or mood informs the examination of newspaper coverage of cultural debates in chapter four and five, along with providing valuable context for the careers of Senator Proxmire and Professor Hatfield in chapters two and three. The second part of this chapter focuses on how scholars have interpreted the decade: its historiography.

Scholars dispute exactly when the 1970s began and ended. They focus attention on disparate trends and events of the period, but since the first accounts were published as
early as 1976, there is a consensus that the era is characterized by individualism and the prevalence of pessimism. To support the “individualism” argument, most scholarly accounts describe the countless self-help trends and fads that included everything from Eastern spiritual practices to whole food-based diets and running. In addition, the fracturing of a national Civil Rights movement into a multitude of factions, mostly with different agendas, is often presented as evidence that Americans were mainly concerned with issues that only affected their own personal lives, rather than the entire nations’ well-being. And no account of the era is complete without including the many unforgettable failures, such as the oil crisis of 1973, the American defeat in the Vietnam War and humiliating retreat from Saigon in early 1975, the dark cloud of the Watergate scandal, and a handful of high-profile environmental disasters. It is easy to see why cynicism ran deep and how the decade has come to be seen as a period of pessimism.

However, a definitive narrative for the 1970s remains a work in progress. The historiography of the era is often disjointed because there were so many trends and events, with each author focusing on one specific factor rather than the larger picture. One historian argues that a mass migration of people and values to the South and West facilitated the massive liberal cultural shift, while others showcase the failures of government as responsible for widespread apathy and pessimism. Chronicling and addressing the massive number of new lifestyles, fads, political failures, and cultural debates often overshadows any clear and direct historical narrative.

In this chapter I highlight men and women’s issues and the cultural debates that surrounded changes affecting men’s and women’s public and private relationships.
“Relationship” is a broad term that includes both heterosexual and homosexual interactions. It is my conclusion that evolving relations between men and women are the best way to understand American culture in the 1970s. Issues amongst men and women themselves, including debates within the Women’s Movement and the fight for homosexual rights, proved significant, but I conclude that it was the debate “between” men and woman, what was commonly referred to as the “battle of the sexes,” that provides the most effective interpretative lens for most of the period’s contentious issues. I often refer to these disputes as men and women’s issues, or as the issues between men and women.

The 1970s witnessed not only women and minorities gaining financial, educational, and sexual freedom, but also straight and gay white males gaining freedom from the restrictive cultural norms of a chauvinistic society. Although the continuous discussion of men and women’s issues was the center of cultural and political debates, it also provided space for discussions of sexual expression and orientation. As men and women gained freedom from cultural norms, alternative sexual expressions also gained more legal protections and cultural acceptance. The gender related issues that address the dynamic and fluid aspects of human sexuality and its impact upon culture and politics are important to historical analysis of any period, but a thorough analysis of them is beyond of the scope of this work.
Part One: Surveying the 1970s

Cultural and Legal Debates

Throughout the 1970s, American politics and culture became increasingly fractured as economic conditions, legal protections, and affirmative action programs fostered the growth of diverse perspectives. Due to a multitude of self-help movements, new family structures, and economic and energy crises, most scholars posit individualism, the liberalization of customs and habits, and a nation confronted with limits as the period’s enduring legacies.¹ All represent salient aspects of the 1970s, but the consistent pattern is of cultural and legal battles that involve the rights of minorities, especially women. Whether on the streets, in editorial pages, or in courtrooms, Americans debated how society was changing. The conversation often revolved around the relationships between men and women even when the ostensible focus was on jobs, energy, the environment, and children.

It is widely accepted by the scholarly community that the 1970s witnessed significant changes in American culture. It has been called the Me Decade and also identified as a time when the New Right—credited with later bringing Ronald Reagan to the White House—came to dominate American politics. The 1970s are known for the Watergate and Vietnam conflicts which eroded the symbolic connections that bound Americans to their leaders and institutions.² Americans sought fulfillment in a variety of new groups, associations, and movements as they turned away from institutionalized structures and national organizations. Historian Bruce Schulman argues that the period

¹ See Tom Wolfe, Peter Carroll, Bruce Schulman, Edward Berkowitz, Ruth Rosen, and Stephanie Slocum-Schaffer, as covered later in this chapter.
was not so much about a narcissistic individualism, but rather it was a time when people looked toward smaller movements and new lifestyles (rather than to national organizations) to solve their problems.  

3 People came together in new ways in order to support their values and share a common cause. Localized groups emerged for feminists, religious conservatives, environmental advocates, Native Americans, the elderly, and the handicapped.  

4 People more often rallied behind single issues than national parties, and more often supported local causes rather than address national concerns. The decade’s moniker, “The Me Decade,” emerged because individuals focused on variety of personal growth programs, but also because individuals increasingly worked on issues that benefited fewer and fewer. The national well-being, what had motivated activism in previous decades, was met with skepticism if not dismissed outright according to this historical perspective.  

5 In the 1950s and through much of the 1960s a more cohesive national identity was buttressed by the social, political, and economic exclusion of minorities, further reinforced by a homogeneous middle class. A consensus was much easier to establish when those with access to power were limited and were racially, economically, and educationally alike. The slow implementation of 1960s ideals altered this equation throughout the 1970s, providing many minorities access to resources, education, and power. It was also during this period that the liberalization of laws and social habits elicited a strong conservative political backlash. A variety of well-intentioned liberal

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4 The Indian Self-Determination Act of 1975 provided the power to self-govern. For further discussion see Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares*, 27.

5 Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies*, xi.
policies proved extremely controversial when it came down to implementation. Racial integration of schools, job training, and modified hiring standards for minority workers brought out the worst in some: racist, sexist and violent behavior. In addition, access to higher education was opened as educational institutions set aside seats for minority students. The motivations behind such programs were arguably altruistic, but the result was heated dispute. Racial tensions and strain over those regarding the sexist treatment of women increased as Americans were forced to confront the divide between their egalitarian laws and a prejudiced society.

Minority groups demanded and were granted increased access to education, economic autonomy, and political influence. The liberalization of laws governing social freedoms and economic opportunities were complemented by society-wide acceptance of once taboo lifestyles. Divorce, oral contraceptives, and pornography became a widely available part of mainstream life. Adults from all walks of life ventured into theaters offering sexual material, and movies such as Deep Throat in 1972 became national phenomena.

Women’s agency, most importantly control over reproductive cycles, increased dramatically due to two events. Although oral contraceptives were approved by the Food and Drug Administration of the federal government in 1960, it was not until approximately 1970 that doctors regularly prescribed them to single women. Abortion was illegal or proscribed by many states until the Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision legalized abortion across the nation in 1973. It is important to delineate women’s rights and control over their bodies given the widespread American embrace of a sexualized
culture. As scholar Anselma Dell’Olio argued in the early 1970s, sexual liberation was often little more than a sham for women, failing to identify them as separate sexual beings with distinct needs and desires. It burdened women with more responsibilities, including the risk of unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and apprehensions about a lack of emotional support.⁶

Women’s rights, including access to contraception and abortion, along with the sexual revolution, were not unanimously embraced. All inspired emotionally charged debates, the growth of the New Right, and sometimes violent backlash.⁷ Ruth Rosen’s work on the women’s movement examines many of these disputes, revealing a mosaic of the era’s tensions.⁸ Further, many legal, economic, and social conflicts spanned gender, race, environmental, and foreign policy concerns. For example, legal issues centered around a changing family structure reflected the pressures of a shrinking economy, the expansion of the labor force, and government’s role in defining what constituted a family. The period’s issues were complex and often interrelated.

1960s Ideals: Great Society Legislation

Many laws enacted from the mid-1960s through the early 1970s sought to uphold the ideals of equality outlined in the nation’s founding documents. Legislative activity peaked in the mid-1960s under the guidance of President Lyndon B. Johnson. Under the reforms known as the “Great Society,” Johnson found support from Democratic majorities in both houses along with a popular mandate to fulfill the progressive

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proposals of John F. Kennedy. Johnson’s Great Society legislation included funding to assist the poor with job training, educational supplements, medical coverage, and housing. Congress passed many pieces of legislation during this period that were intended to combat poverty and eliminate discrimination. These included the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 assuring minority voting and registration; the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, providing significant funding to schools that predominantly served low-income children; the Immigration and National Services Act of 1965, abolishing the national-origins quotas in immigration law; the Higher Education Act of 1965, creating scholarships and low-interest loans for students; and finally, the Social Security Act of 1965, creating Medicare—our nation’s primary health-insurance program for the elderly and disabled. Additional legislation expanded the scope of funding for higher education by providing subsidies for the Arts and Humanities among other programs. Taken together, this whirlwind of legislation set the stage for a restructuring of society that expanded who had access to opportunities, resources, and eventually power.⁹

The Civil Rights act of 1964 was the legislative centerpiece of these socially progressive laws. First introduced by Kennedy in 1963, it was stalled in the House of Representatives until his assassination. The landmark legislation outlawed major forms of discrimination against blacks and women. It ended unequal application of voter registration requirements, racial segregation in schools, at the workplace, and at facilities that served the general public.

⁹ Gary B. Nash; et al., The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society, Volume 2 (from 1877) (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2004), 852.
The scope and enforcement powers of the Civil Rights act of 1964 were initially weak, but were reinforced by a series of amendments, executive orders, and legal decisions. Between 1964 and 1972 a series of executive orders, legislative amendments and judicial rulings provided additional reinforcements. Critically important was the Supreme Court’s 1964 reversal of its 1875 Civil Rights Act ruling. Congress could now legally prohibit discrimination in the private sector. Additional legal rulings further prohibited gender discrimination in hiring practices, eliminating separate advertising listings for men’s and women’s jobs. President Johnson signed one example central to gender conflicts in 1967. Following strong lobbying from the Nation Organization for Women (NOW), executive Order 11246 required all entities receiving federal funding to end gender discrimination in their hiring practices. The Federal Government mandated that employers no longer deny women jobs. Women had commonly been excluded from employment that required heavy lifting or had been disqualified for employment because they had children. Overall, Great Society laws provided strong legal protections for women and minorities.10

Among the several congressional amendments to the Civil Rights Act, none had a greater impact upon women’s formative educational and athletic experiences than Title IX. The 1972 amendment to the 1964 Civil Rights Act stipulated that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance[.]"11 For bureaucratic reasons, it took most of the

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10 Frum, How We Got Here, 245-246.
decade before the law fully affected women’s educational experiences, but many institutions applied its provisions immediately. Before the end of the 1970s, women’s access to sports grew exponentially. In 1971, girls had accounted for just seven percent of high school athletes, but, by 1978, they accounted for thirty-two percent. Life for American women was changing drastically as they gained access to education and athletics along with all the associated benefits such as the financial opportunities that education offered, physical health from athletics, and the self-confidence that comes from both, which were developed in order to enforce educational and employment equality.

Collectively known as “affirmative action,” these programs took active steps to fix the historic cultural and legal oppression that hindered the success of minority groups. Few issues were as controversial as these programs in the 1970s, especially once the recession wrecked the job market and the oil crisis inflated the price of all consumer goods. The implementation of these federally mandated programs in the 1970s contributed significantly to the decade’s political, economic, and cultural debates.

In 1974 one of the most salient examples of nastiness and outrage towards affirmative action policy took place in Boston and was directed at school children. A series of judicial rulings culminated in the Supreme Court’s 1971 ruling in Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, which declared busing an appropriate remedy for the problem of racial imbalance among schools. When school opened in the fall of 1974, many South Boston parents held their students out of class and a handful of others hurled rocks and bottles at the buses, taunting the black students who now attended their neighborhood schools. Skirmishes divided black and white students, and weeks later

about/cor/coord/titleixstat.php#Sec.+1681.+Sex [Accessed August 16, 2011].
a white student was stabbed by a black student. Mobs of parents gathered outside the school following the stabbing and fighting led to eleven adults reporting injuries.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Failing the People: Oil, the Environment, Vietnam, and Lies}

Disputes over enforcement of integration and equality were exacerbated by distrust of political leadership. There were a number of transgressions—some forgivable, and some reprehensible—that emanated from America’s highest political offices in the 1970s. These included direct lies regarding the Vietnam War and criminal activity from the executive branch, along with the seedy sexual escapades of powerful congressmen. While these contributed toward a pessimistic mood, it was also the government’s inability to solve the nation’s energy and economic crises that further eroded public faith in government. Lies, deceptions, and failures combined to create a widespread cynicism.

In the flush post-World War II era, the federal government fine-tuned the national economy into peak performance. However, the poor economic conditions throughout

\textsuperscript{12} Berkowitz, \textit{Something Happened}, 174-175. Boston, one of the oldest cities in the United States, consisted of a series of small but well-defined neighborhoods, each with its own ethnic character. Segregated neighborhoods produced segregated neighborhood schools, a common feature of the nation’s larger cities (Berkowitz, \textit{Something Happened}, 7). The Court expanded its influence by articulating that busing was an appropriate remedy even in situations where the racial imbalance resulted from the selection of students based on geographic proximity to the school rather than from deliberate districting. It was hoped that this ruling would eliminate the decades of persistent de facto segregation (Schulman, \textit{The Seventies}, 13-14). Following a class-action suit filed by black parents in Boston, U.S. District Court Judge Arthur Garrity found the Boston School Board guilty of segregation and ordered compliance. Upon the Board’s refusal, a plan was created with state authorities that paired the adjacent neighborhoods of South Boston (White) with Roxbury (Black). Four arrests were made and two police officers were injured when black students re-boarded buses after the first day of school. Three members of the Boston School Board were held in contempt before the end of 1974 and tensions continued to escalate with further rioting before a relative calm returned, aided by police officers stationed at the affected schools. The long-term impact of integration in the Boston public schools proved negligible in terms of integrating the student populations and was representative of why racial integration was seldom achieved. Berkowitz writes, “The permanent result of the battle of Boston was that the white population in Boston’s public schools dropped precipitously as parents put nearly half of the white students in private, parochial, or suburban schools.” While the intention was to bring races together and end de facto segregation, forced integration actually pushed the races further apart and undermined the functionality of the public school system in Boston (Berkowitz, \textit{Something Happened}, 175-176). For a detailed discussion of the event, see John Hillson, \textit{The Battle of Boston} (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977).
most of the 1970s made managing the economy difficult, and a lackluster economic situation further eroded Americans’ trust of their leaders. Simply put, for many it did not appear that their leaders were able to solve the problems that plagued their daily lives or to lead the nation effectively. According to official economic indicators, the nation was in a recession from March 1973 through March 1975, and again from 1978 through the early 1980s.\textsuperscript{13} Conventional wisdom held that there was always a trade-off between inflation and unemployment. Since World War II, an increase in the unemployment rate had been associated with a decrease in the inflation rate. With relative predictability, economic experts could reduce unemployment by increasing the money supply and thus increase inflation, or increase unemployment by tightening the money supply. These models failed to hold true in the 1970s. One factor was the drastic increase in oil prices that triggered inflation on all goods and services, in turn slowing commerce and reducing employment. Addressing simultaneous inflation and unemployment bewildered the experts.\textsuperscript{14}

On 6 October 1973, a coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria invaded Israel. The unanticipated war created an immediate fifty percent increase in oil prices and another doubling by January. The initial military offensive was a success as the Arab coalition took control of lands that Israel had captured and occupied since the 1967 Six-Day War. America was dependent upon the Arab nations for its oil, leading President Nixon initially to restrict American support of Israel. Nixon did not want to antagonize the Arab nations and trigger an oil embargo, yet Israel was an ally. Within a few weeks it

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Berkowitz, \textit{Something Happened}, 55.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 56-58.
\end{itemize}
became apparent that Israel could not repel the invasion without significant assistance. In a policy reversal, Nixon authorized a massive American airlift of war materials. The Arab-dominated Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) responded to American intervention with an oil embargo that cut off America, Western Europe, and Japan for several months, and thus oil prices spiked globally.\textsuperscript{15}

The oil embargo lasted from mid-October 1973 until mid-March 1974, and magnified America’s ongoing recession that began in early 1973.\textsuperscript{16} For a nation that was increasingly dependent upon imported oil, the embargo caused prices to skyrocket, leading to long lines at filling stations across the nation and rationing in some areas. It quickly became a full-blown energy crisis that impacted daily life. President Nixon called for lowering thermostats to sixty-eight degrees, reducing highway speed limits to fifty-five miles per hour, cutting back on air travel and implementing increased daylight savings time. The energy crisis was a dominant feature of American life in the mid-1970s.\textsuperscript{17}

Nixon’s energy policy before and after the embargo was grounded in a laissez faire approach: business and technology could solve the nation’s energy problems if government did not stand in the way. This policy failed to distinguish between national interests and the interests of oil companies. National security and economic stability required a reliable oil source and strong efficiency standards in order to moderate consumption within the limits of production. As capitalistic enterprises, oil companies

\textsuperscript{15} Berkowitz, \textit{Something Happened}, 55.

\textsuperscript{16} A brief analysis of American oil imports reveals why the OPEC embargo had such a drastic effect upon the price of oil. In 1960, America imported nineteen percent of its oil. In 1970 the amount had grown to twenty-four percent, and by 1974 it was thirty-eight percent (Carroll, \textit{It Seemed Like Nothing Happened}, 119).

\textsuperscript{17} Carroll, \textit{It Seemed Like Nothing Happened}, 118.
were driven to create profits rather than support national security or efficiency standards. A lack of government intervention allowed oil companies to invest abroad where profit margins were higher because oil was physically easier to access. OPEC’s embargo shut off access to many of these sources, yet a lack of resources did not harm the oil industry’s bottom line. The business model of oil companies did not deal with scarcity issues because scarcity of the product supported higher prices and in turn higher profit margins. The major oil companies posted fourth-quarter profits for 1973 that were fifty-seven percent higher than those of the previous year. For oil companies, contraction in the supply proved more profitable than abundance. These facts did not go unnoticed by the public who held OPEC, the U.S. Government, and oil companies equally responsible for the crisis.¹⁸

Nixon’s laissez-faire energy policy also ignited environmental debates, a widely engaged topic of the 1970s. The president responded to the energy crisis by further removing government regulations. Nixon argued that reducing governmental oversight of price controls and other interventions would lead to more energy production and thus lower prices. His proposals included accelerated leasing of offshore oil wells, approval of the Alaska pipeline, public funding for research and development, fewer price controls on natural gas, development of more coal production, and quick approvals for new nuclear reactors. By January 1974, these policies had led to more nuclear power plants under construction than were currently in operation. Many of these programs were vocally criticized by environmentalists, who believed that the government and industry were

¹⁸ Ibid., 118.
sacrificing personal and ecological health for the sake of profits and that the root issue was that the government failed to manage the oil industry.\textsuperscript{19}

The environmental movement flourished as more people became concerned about human impact on the land and the effects of industry and technology on human health. The modern environmental movement was rooted in Rachel Carson’s 1962 work, \textit{Silent Spring}, which brought environmental concerns to a popular, widespread audience through a uniquely accessible medium. The book charged American chemical companies with widespread environment degradation and countless human and animal deaths. Carson’s work explained to the public how pesticides and herbicides functioned, describing their research and their development during World War II as biological warfare and how, following the war, they were mass-marketed for household and industrial use. The popular book offered a scientific understanding of chemical toxins to the public.

Environmental groups had figured prominently in the debates over energy policy, public health, and the environment beginning in the late 1960s, when a series of environmental disasters became widely publicized. These included the “death” of Lake Erie caused by algae blooms fed by artificial fertilizers, a series of fires on Cleveland’s Cuyahoga river, the Santa Barbara oil spill of 1969, and the campaign against dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) by the Environmental Defense Fund.

Publicity and activism produced a series of monumental environmental protections from the federal government, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Endangered Species Act of 1969, and the Clean Water Act of 1972

\textsuperscript{19} Berkowitz, \textit{Something Happened}, 121-122.
(originally the Federal Water Pollution Control Amendments of 1972). Legislation was central to environmental conservation, but implementation was always controversial and required the cooperation of local and federal agencies along with public support. “Earth Day” became the centerpiece event of the environmental movement. Envisioned as a national teach-in to publicize ecological problems and to support environmental legislation, Earth Day was conceived by Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson as a way to connect the growing number of grass roots environmentalists with existing congressional support for environmental regulations. The first Earth Day—held on April 22, 1970—helped encourage the next generation to become actively involved in protecting and cleaning up the planet. Earth Day signaled widespread involvement in environmental issues and quickly grew in scale to become a permanent fixture of the environmental movement in America. The event also represented a public expression of an emerging spiritual perspective in which humans were deeply connected with the land and the global community.\textsuperscript{20}

The idealistic counterculture of the 1960s was generating new communities and new ways of life, many of which reinforced a strong connection to the earth. As the revolutionary lifestyles of the 1960s entered the mainstream, it was estimated that some 2,000 rural communities and 5,000 collectives had sprung up by the early 1970s.\textsuperscript{21} Americans built countless communes, ashrams, organic farms and other mostly smaller collective organizations that supported their personal spiritual and environmental ethic. Where the physical space was available, these groups largely embraced a back-to-the-

\textsuperscript{20} Schulman, \textit{The Seventies}, 90.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 88.
land ethos as they united under the spiritual belief that everything was connected to

Environmental concerns became a way for young and old to become involved and
have a tangible impact upon the world. Americans were feeling increasingly isolated and
powerless, unable to address the direction of world affairs, or solve the big problems. The
California-based magazine *New West* editorialized in the mid-1970s:

> Increasingly, we have handed over our destinies, our bodies, our lives to
> specialized experts.... [O]ur dependence on expertise is creating a paralyzing
> sense of individual helplessness. And the experts have been wrong. They showed
> us how to defeat the Vietcong with technology. They concocted deadly pesticides
to increase food production... but somehow... they missed the larger picture[.]²³

This environmental ethos also expressed widespread distrust that America’s experts and
leaders would protect citizens from the harmful effects of industry, technology, and their
own government.

Along with environmental disasters, a number of other high-profile events
shocked the nation. These included a collapse of the democratic process at the
Democratic National Convention (1968), the deaths of students at Kent State University
when shot by the National Guard (1970), and illegal bombing missions into Cambodia
and Laos (made public knowledge in 1973). The backdrop for these events was the
endless war in Vietnam. Following the Tet offensive by the North Vietnamese in early
1968, public support for the war dropped from fifty-six to forty percent, while another
forty percent openly opposed the war.²⁴

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²² Ibid., 88.
The Vietnam War eventually cost billions of dollars and the lives of more than 50,000 American servicemen and women. But the greatest blow to the already strained trust in public institutions were the willful lies from the Nixon Administration. Since the beginning of American military involvement in Vietnam many had been skeptical. In 1971, the American public was presented with documented facts of “the calculated misleading of the public, the purposeful manipulation of public opinion, the stunning discrepancies between public pronouncements and private plans.”

The Pentagon Papers revealed that four administrations, from Harry S. Truman’s to Lyndon B. Johnson’s, had misled the public regarding their intentions in Vietnam.

The publication of The Pentagon Papers inspired debates over what government documents should be available to the public, why America originally became involved in Vietnam, and the general honesty of American leaders. One salient example involved President Johnson’s 1964 presidential campaign. Running for re-election, President Johnson promised that "we seek no wider war" in Vietnam while attacking his opponent for proposing to bomb North Vietnam. Acting as president, he simultaneously approved expanding the bombing of North Vietnam. The publication of The Pentagon Papers made it clear to the American public that their elected leaders could not be trusted.

Deceptions surrounding the scope and intention of the Vietnam War also haunted the Nixon administration. Illegal and covert bombing missions into neutral Cambodia, called Operation Menu, were carried out between 1968 and 1972. For four years, the full scope

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of Operation Menu remained unknown to Congress, the media, and the American public. It was at the beginning of Nixon’s second term in 1973 that Congressional hearings revealed this information to the public.\textsuperscript{27}

The war in Vietnam was protracted and expensive. Unlike a poor job market and inflated oil prices that had many contributing factors, the war was a clear choice by the executive branch. By 1972, according to opinion polls, a majority of Americans believed the war to be immoral. Many openly opposed America’s war policy, including thousands of returning veterans who marched on Washington on April 23, 1971. In a public demonstration, over 700 medals won in battle were discarded along the west steps of the Capitol building. Anti-war protests across the nation garnered the support of millions and participation at larger rallies numbered in the hundreds of thousands. The public connected the growing financial crisis with the war in Vietnam and concluded that both resulted from government dishonesty.\textsuperscript{28}

Under mounting domestic pressure and without the possibility of a military victory, President Nixon sought an end to the Vietnam War. 27 January, 1973, America signed a peace treaty and withdrew the last of its combat troops. This signaled that South Vietnam would eventually be overtaken by northern forces. Many interpreted this defeat as a failure of American men, as war was regarded as their exclusive domain. For many, it led to a questioning of the masculine values that had underwritten American

\textsuperscript{27} Senator Proxmire played a pivotal role in revealing these clandestine military operations when he received a letter in December 1972 from a major in the Air Force whose career had been ruined when he challenged the legality of Operation Menu through the Air Force chain of command. Proxmire worked for months to uncover the illegal military attacks, utilizing his seat on the Senate Armed Services Committee to investigate and expose the cover-up. See: William Shawcross, \textit{Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia} (New York: Washington Square Press, 1979), 287.

In the first two decades of the Cold War, from 1945-1965, an ideology marked by masculinity had permeated political discourse. This was most visible in the language used to describe one’s political stance towards communism. One’s position toward communism was either “hard” or “soft,” a word choice carrying plain sexual overtones. These terms also addressed one’s physical and mental fitness, thus connecting the virility and health of the individual and the nation to an international policy position. This sexualized language reflected a polarized world, in which the masculine attributes of “firmness” and “strength”—associated with capitalism—could overcome the “feminized” and “corrupting” influence of communism. The decision to fight the Vietnam War was informed by this gendered binary in which a reluctance to engage in fighting communism on the battlefield was assumed a weakness.\(^\text{30}\)

In addition, the loss in Vietnam took place during a period of the renegotiation of roles for men and women within the larger American society. Men lost in Vietnam while Civil Rights legislation forced them to share their social and legal privileges with women. Women advanced into higher education, entered the workforce, and sought professional employment in unprecedented numbers. At the same time, the nation’s laws governing marriage, procreation, and sexual discrimination were drastically rewritten at state and federal levels. These changes, as well as the social and economic costs of the war in Vietnam, heightened tensions between men and women. Many believed that the important masculine virtues that had made the nation strong were deteriorating. A peace

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treaty was signed in 1973, but the last American diplomats and military personnel did not leave Saigon until April 1975. Pictures of Vietnamese refugees clinging to the landing skids of American evacuation helicopters, featured on the front page of newspapers, left Haunting images. For many the shameful retreat represented a loss of the nation’s manhood.\textsuperscript{31}

As Americans evacuated Saigon, the last of the Watergate conspirators stood trial. The lengthy Watergate scandal magnified public distrust of elected officials. In 1969, Nixon secretly authorized the creation of “the plumbers,” an extralegal investigative unit. This group was charged with plugging information leaks from the White House and took on other covert activities. In 1971, the plumbers sought to discredit the man who had leaked \textit{The Pentagon Papers}, Daniel Ellsberg. Looking to sully his reputation, they broke into his psychiatrist’s office and copied his file. While the information did not prove useful, the plumbers continued to seek more pro-active assignments. In 1972, they burglarized and bugged the Democratic National Headquarters in the Watergate office complex in Washington D.C. just prior to the presidential elections. On their second attempt, the plumbers botched the break-in and were arrested by District of Columbia police. The White House successfully masked its involvement in the affair and survived the election with very little negative publicity. Nixon won the election in one of the largest landsides in American history: over sixty percent of the popular vote. However,

\textsuperscript{31} For a more detailed discussion of how the decision to enter the war in Vietnam was framed by gender, see Robert D. Dean, \textit{Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy} (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).
over the next year, the dogged work of two young *Washington Post* reporters slowly uncovered the Executive Branch’s involvement.\textsuperscript{32}

Nixon did everything in his power to distance himself from the scandal and assure the public that he was not involved in the break-in and subsequent cover up. In the spring of 1973, he pleaded his innocence on national television and accepted the resignations of several top aides, the Attorney General, and a handful of other administration officials, including the acting director for the Federal Bureau of Investigations.\textsuperscript{33} Despite this purge and Nixon’s public denials, as the year wore on news reports made it clear that the White House was strongly linked to the break-in. The Senate responded by creating a special committee to investigate Watergate. The hearings were broadcast between mid-May and early-August 1973 and widely watched by the American public. The mundane inquiry turned into a charged atmosphere when it was revealed that the Oval Office and adjoining rooms contained automatic tape recording devices. The independent prosecutor assigned to the case demanded access to the tapes with a legal subpoena. Nixon refused, citing executive privilege.

As the prosecution and Nixon wrestled over possession of the tapes, Vice President Spiro Agnew was charged with tax evasion and bribery, crimes committed while governor of Maryland a decade earlier. Agnew resigned in early October 1973, and Nixon enacted a never-before-used provision of the Constitution in order to replace him. Under the direction of and with near unanimous support from Congress, Nixon appointed

\textsuperscript{32} Berkowitz, *Something Happened*, 21-22.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 24.
House Minority Leader Gerald Ford, a long-time representative from Michigan, as his Vice President.

In late October 1973, the dispute over the tapes peaked. The special prosecutor assigned to the case refused to accept anything but full access to the evidence. Nixon ordered that the independent prosecutor be fired, but rather than carry out the order the Attorney General resigned. The Deputy Attorney General refused to carry out the same order and was fired by Nixon. Rather than abide by the law, Nixon used his presidential powers to avoid it. The President’s personal life was also scrutinized with an audit by the Internal Revenue Service that began in December. In April 1974, the audit concluded that while in office, Nixon had become a millionaire, that he had lied on his personal income tax returns, and that he owed the federal government nearly half a million dollars in back taxes.

In February 1974, Congress debated impeachment, and the pressure to deliver the tapes increased. The House of Representatives authorized the House Judiciary Committee to investigate whether grounds existed for the president’s impeachment, while a grand jury indicted all of the principal Watergate conspirators and named the president as a co-conspirator. Nixon continued to refuse to release the tapes until late April, when he finally delivered slightly edited transcripts. Printed in newspapers and paperbacks, millions read the transcripts which provided a behind-the-scenes look at the president. The public knew that the president was involved in the Watergate conspiracy and that he lied on his income tax returns. The public did not know how Nixon conducted himself in

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34 Ibid., 22-23.
private. The published tapes provided a candid view that historian Edward Berkowitz
describes as the disrobing of the President:

The papers showed Nixon to be a mean and petty man, lacking in presidential
qualities. Presidents were not supposed to swear or make derogatory references
toward Jews, and here was indisputable evidence, released by the president
himself, that showed that Nixon did both.\textsuperscript{36}

Leaving the president stripped bare, the transcripts revealed a man devoid of the qualities
that the public expected of their leader. Overnight, even Nixon’s staunchest supporters
demanded his resignation and what remained of the romanticized dignity associated with
the presidency also evaporated. The tapes fueled a public obsession with the personal
lives of American leaders and, thereafter, coverage of the personal lives of politicians
vied with political issues for media attention. The personal and political became
intertwined, even for the nation’s leaders.\textsuperscript{37}

In July 1974, the House Judiciary Committee adopted three articles of
impeachment relating to the Watergate conspiracy. In late July, the Supreme Court, to
which Nixon had appointed four members, ruled eight-to-zero that executive privilege
did not protect the president from the judicial process.\textsuperscript{38} This landmark decision put an
official limit on presidential power and appeared to save the American democracy from a
lawless Executive Branch. With impeachment looming on the horizon, Nixon addressed
the American public on 8 August, 1974, and became the first U.S. president to resign.
Gerald Ford, the appointed Vice President, became the first American president not
elected to the Executive Branch.

\textsuperscript{36} Berkowitz, \textit{Something Happened}, 29.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 74.
\textsuperscript{38} Carroll, \textit{It Seemed Like Nothing Happened}, 157.
Before Watergate, the private lives of national leaders, including their sexual lives, had remained largely hidden. The media turned a blind eye to transgressions and the men of the “old boy” network protected each other from outside scrutiny. Members of Congress helped each other by covering up instances of drunkenness or evidences of senility. What one did away from work was usually considered private. Watergate helped to change that situation and became the point in time when uncovering personal mishaps and breaches of public trust became a media priority.\footnote{Berkowitz, \textit{Something Happened}, 88-89.}

In addition to \textit{The Pentagon Papers}, Operation Menu, and the resignations of Spiro Agnew and Richard Nixon, other high-profile incidents confirmed that elected officials could not be trusted. In October 1974, shortly after Ford took office, a scandal erupted involving Wilbur Mills, one of the most influential members of Congress. Mills had begun his Congressional career in 1939, and had served on the Ways and Means Committee since 1942. As the committee’s chairman for eighteen years (1957-1975), he legislated for the entire House of Representatives in relative secrecy. His committee was so powerful that it could write and propose legislation with little input from other members of congress or the public. Many consider him largely responsible for the drafting and passage of Medicare in 1965.\footnote{Ibid., 87.}

Years of substance abuse came into public view when he was pulled over in a limousine while drunk at 2:00 a.m. in the District of Columbia in October 1974. His companion, an exotic dancer, added a layer of sensation by running from the vehicle and jumping into a nearby waterway. Surprisingly, the incident was brushed-off and he was
re-elected the following month. Before the end of November, while attending a strip show, the Congressman was invited onstage and kissed by the same woman. Following the evening’s entertainment, Mills—clearly intoxicated—held an impromptu press conference from the woman’s dressing room. *Time Magazine* described the fallout from the event a few weeks later as “…one of the steepest falls from power in congressional history…. The spectacle of one of the House’s most revered elder statesman cavorting on stage with a stripper sent shock waves through Congress[.]” In disgrace, Mills’ committee removed him as chairman and he did not seek re-election to his congressional seat in 1976.

Politicians, even the most powerful, were losing their ability to hide their personal lives from public view. Male privilege was being challenged and powerful men were less able to hide their sexual transgressions. Increased attention from the media combined with public interest and changing values regarding the roles of women in society made exposure of such behavior not simply a political liability, but unacceptable. Uncovering the exploitation of women was also increasingly central to media coverage. With increased opportunities for women and legal protections of their rights, men were not as easily able to exploit women. Addressing the coverage by four newspapers in 1975, chapters four and five will present several examples of legal disputes involving women’s rights. American society was changing and demanded more egalitarian treatment of women. Mills’s sexual indiscretions were cause to question his professional

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42 This trend was complicated by the increase in both agency and commercial exploitation of female sexuality.
competency. Wealth and power proved less able to insulate elected officials from sexist treatment of women.43

**Alternative Lifestyles and Local Movements**

As discussed above, dishonesty, criminal activity, and sexual transgressions influenced how Americans viewed their leaders. As the 1970s unfolded, the American people increasingly viewed government as the source of their problems, rather than the solution.44 Distrust of authority, loss of jobs, rising costs, the new rights and protections afforded women and other minorities, along with many environmental and health concerns—all defined the era. A quickly changing social, political, and economic landscape caused many to lose interest in national politics. Voter turnout steadily declined throughout the 1970s.45 Eschewing large national movements, many people withdrew from political involvement altogether, choosing not to vote; some became involved in grassroots projects while others sought to create lifestyles reflecting their own values. Believing that the system was broken, that it could not solve their problems, and that their leaders could not be trusted, Americans increasingly made individual changes and engaged problems on a smaller scale.46

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43 This connection was more obvious with a scandal that involved another powerful representative that unfolded throughout 1976. On May 23, 1976, the *Washington Post* broke the story of a woman being paid $14,000 per year for the past two years as a staff member of Wayne Hays. However, she had never worked in his office, but was visited by Hays twice a week at her apartment for sex. See “Closed Session Romance on the Hill, *Washington Post*, May 23, 1976. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/local/longterm/tours/scandal/elizray.htm (September 26, 2011). Also Edward Berkowitz, *Something Happened*, 102.

44 This slogan helped propel Reagan to the White House in 1980.


For many these changes were simply choosing a healthier lifestyle by purchasing local wholesome produce along with preparing more meals at home.\textsuperscript{47} Others made time in their daily routines for healthy activities and exercise. Tens of millions of Americans began running and jogging in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{48} Many in their late teens and early twenties made drastic lifestyle changes based on group living arrangements. Renouncing processed foods and modern comforts, tens of thousands of younger Americans joined or created communes.\textsuperscript{49} A limited inquiry in 1970 found nearly two-thousand permanent communal living arrangements in thirty-four states.\textsuperscript{50}

In New York State, a handful of scientists linked pesticide use, specifically DDT, to the decline of large bird populations and formed an environmental group. Under pressure from these concerned scientists and citizens, the New York state government first banned DDT in one county, and in 1970 placed a moratorium on its use throughout the state. With an expanded effort, a national ban of DDT was instituted by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1972.\textsuperscript{51} In order to address environmental concerns, many formed community organizations and professional groups. In another example of local activism in New York state, the residents of Love Canal, a community built on contaminated soil in Niagara Falls, banned together in 1978, in order to protect their

\textsuperscript{47} Schulan, \textit{The Seventies}, 90.
families from birth defects and illness. They worked for redress from the community’s developer. 52

Movements, organizations, and personal choices expanded in scope. Many activists from the 1960s chose in the 1970s to focus their attention on a variety of new concerns such as ecology, ethnicity, sexuality, and women’s liberation. However, historians agree that pessimism was the pervasive mood of the 1970s. The loss of jobs and the defeat in the Vietnam War, increased prices, reduced resources, and distrust of government and national institutions all reinforced the feeling that the nation was stalled. Despite this somber mood, Americans involved themselves in a variety of issues that sought to improve the human condition. Historian Peter Carroll explains how, “Convinced of the inadequacies of federal programs, political activists turned increasingly to more manageable arenas—state, local, and neighborhood organizations.”53 Activists in the 1970s were likely to work on smaller-scale causes, seeking tangible results.

**Why Change is Difficult?**

Implementing change on a national level proved difficult and controversial, particularly with regard to civil rights. Emotions flared whenever governmental policies sought to enforce affirmative action programs or integrate schools. Programs that increased women’s access to higher education were less controversial than those that helped women become gainfully employed. Hiring, promotion, and school admittance

policies aimed at increasing opportunities for minorities involved complex guidelines that appeared to disadvantage white males. With retail and service accounting for around seventy percent of all new private-sector jobs created in the 1970s and the loss of well-paid blue-collar manufacturing jobs dominated by white males, it appeared that men were losing jobs as women were gaining them.54

Any advantages provided to one group in a shrinking economy were very controversial. People’s lives were threatened by financial forces outside of their control and when government mandated changes—even with good intentions—the changes were met with fear. Seeking racial equality, the goal of school integration was interpreted by some as a policy that would harm their children, either through physical violence or by degrading their children’s educational experience. In a time of severe financial crisis the fear of either possibility proved incendiary. As members of the white working class in South Boston felt the economic contraction of the mid-1970s, they responded with physical hostility to forced integration.55

Cultural systems are notoriously resistant to change. The progressive ideas and lifestyles embraced by some inspired a backlash from others. Thus, federal policies seeking to implement new educational and hiring standards along with the racial integration of schools were met with vociferous opposition. Like social systems, economic systems are also very resistant to change. Even in a bad economy, those with jobs and sustenance are invested in the failed system for their survival. Economic systems are subject to slow evolution or collapse. There are few historical examples of sweeping

54 Bailey and Farber, *American in the 70s*, 83-44.
top-down economic changes that produced long-term stability, especially within
democratic governments. In the post-World War II era, prosperity helped to mitigate
class and race conflicts throughout the 1950s and 1960s, although there were a handful of
race based riots. Economic growth helped to insulate ethnic and racial groups. Many
could afford to move into or create a community tailored to their social comfort zone. As
the economy faltered in the mid-1970s, physical mobility became limited and people
simply had fewer options. Social changes and economic constraints contributed to the
heated debates of the 1970s. The following section will examine how scholars from the
1970s to the present interpret the contentious decade. Interpretations vary from a focus on
“individualism,” shifts in the locations of populations and power, to political corruption
and social issues. The most recent studies have paid special attention to cultural
obsessions, such as the preoccupation with violent crimes at the end of the decade or with
a sexualized popular culture that dominated mainstream television.

**Part Two: Historiography**

**Early Interpretation of the 1970s: Wolfe, Lasch and Thurow**

During the 1970s, three academics set the tone for scholarly interpretations of the
era: Tom Wolfe, Christopher Lasch, and Lester Thurow. In 1976, American Studies
scholar and journalist Tom Wolfe published *The ‘Me’ Decade and the Third Great
Awakening*, an essay identifying three contemporary trends in American culture. First
was the pervasive obsession with the self, second was the emergence of the born-again
and other fundamentalist religious movements from the Christian right, and third was a
new-found social acceptance of divorce. Wolfe saw the 1970s as a time in which the
individual had become the center of the universe, describing the process of self-improvement as putting all of “your attention and your energies on the most fascinating subject on earth: Me.”

One clear example of the focus on the needs of the individual rather than the family was the prevalence of divorce. Wolfe interpreted the sharp increase in divorce as an expression of American’s increasingly narcissistic tendencies. In previous decades, divorce literally disqualified men from respectable positions such as serving as astronauts and it had injured presidential hopefuls. However by the mid-1970s, the divorce rate had surpassed fifty percent and divorce’s social and professional stigma waned. With the dramatic increase, the fate of individuals following divorce emerged as a genuine cultural concern. For example, older women lacking financial resources and job skills, due to divorce or the death of their spouse, were actively addressed by the women’s movement. While Wolfe’s tone offended some (for instance, calling divorce “wife shucking”), his work exposed the discrimination faced by older women. American men and women were no longer staying married for their spouses, their children or their communities. In Wolfe’s estimation, many Americans were living for themselves and only seeking individual fulfillment.

Whether interpreted as a negative turn inward or a positive turn toward self-improvement, American values were changing as Americans experimented with a variety of new lifestyles. Wolfe believed that the newly identified need to be saved—to feel an ecstatic connection to the divine—was the direct result of individualistic lifestyles. This

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57 Ibid.
focus on the self led to an array of gurus, drug-rehabilitation programs, communes, self-help groups, and pseudo-scientific organizations, which by the end of the decade contributed to the emergence of a new and powerful political presence: the Christian Right.\(^{58}\)

Throughout the 1970s, America witnessed a religious explosion in the form of evangelicals, mega-churches, televangelists and other Christians who were politically engaged and offered individual salvation to their followers. These groups reacted to the changing laws governing abortion, pornography, and homosexuality with a mixture of concern, outrage, and dissent. They believed the liberalization of American culture, along with specific laws, such as the banning of prayer and Bible reading in schools, were undermining the moral foundation of the nation.\(^{59}\)

Historian, moralist, and social critic Christopher Lasch also viewed the era as fatally focused on the individual. His 1979 work *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, examines the historical roots of the “Me Decade” from a psychological and cultural perspective. He argues that the mass marketing and consumer culture of the post World War II era gave rise to a fragile narcissistic personality structure. The individual raised in this environment was inclined to fear commitments and lasting relationships while dreading aging. Lasch argues that these traits, combined with a boundless admiration for fame and celebrity and historic declines in agriculture and manufacturing, undermined older notions of self-help and

\(^{58}\) Ibid.  
individual initiative. For Lasch, Americans were no longer driven by a desire to help their communities or nation.\textsuperscript{60}

Self-preservation became a reality for many who struggled through the prolonged recessions of the 1970s. Economist Lester C. Thurow addressed Americans’ concerns from an economic perspective. In his 1980 book, \textit{The Zero-Sum Society: Distribution and the Possibilities for Economic Change}, he argued that the problems of inflation, slow economic growth and environmental protection can only be solved if paid for by some members of society through taxation. He argued that sustained growth is led by government, not by free enterprise. The government must guide the economy; otherwise reliance on individual self-preservation would fail to care for the environment and the poorest in society. The result would be an overall decline of the economy and the nation.\textsuperscript{61}

With statistics Thurow showed how the standard of living for the average family had declined, had the value of the dollar in relation to other industrialized nations. Thus, the American dollar in the mid-to-late 1970s purchased fewer goods than at the beginning of the decade. In addition, well-paying jobs were increasingly difficult to find as American industrial innovation and productivity lagged behind Japan and Western European nations. Americans had fewer jobs and less money at the end of the 1970s.\textsuperscript{62} Thurow’s catchy title, \textit{Zero-Sum Society}, provided an accessible phrase describing how many Americans felt about all aspects of life, from jobs and investments to education.

\textsuperscript{60} Christopher Lasch, \textit{The Culture of Narcissism} (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1979).
\textsuperscript{62} Thurow, \textit{The Zero-sum Society}, 6.
Thurow created an argument applicable on the macroeconomic scale, while neatly summarizing how many Americans felt about their economic prospects. In the recession-prone 1970s, it was a common belief that one person’s gain was another person’s loss. Scarcity produced fear and anxiety. Both emotions fueled disputes over public policy, judicial rulings, government spending, and busing.

Although Wolfe, Lasch and Thurow published their works over thirty years ago, current historical analysis largely agrees with their general conclusions. While specific terms, such as “wife shucking” and a “culture of narcissism,” have not stood the test of time, individualism, economic constraints, changing social patterns, and the self-help movement have formed the core of subsequent studies and continue to define postmodern interpretations of the 1970s.

In addition, a significant refinement in the presentation and interpretation of these historical themes has taken place. The concept of individualism has been replaced by a more thorough analysis of specific movements and lifestyle choices. Economic constraints and opportunities are now accepted as interwoven with changing social patterns. Changing family structures, and conflicts over federal employment and educational admissions requirements, are now accepted as aspects of larger shifts rather than expressions of individualism. Increased individualism was the result of more educational and economic opportunities afforded to women and minorities. Moreover, individualism was also the product of the cultural liberalization of society. Anyone could participate in new living arrangements, experiment sexually in private, or embrace a new found sexual expression in public by visiting pornography stores and/or expressing
oneself at a disco club. The following is a chronological evaluation of subsequent book-length historical analyses of the 1970s.


Peter Carroll’s *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: America in the 1970s* is very inclusive in its analysis of significant trends throughout the decade. Carroll conveys the general mood and feel of the era as a “quiet, almost subliminal revolution... altering the contours of the cultural landscape,” stating that “Americans increasingly looked towards alternative values and institutions to create a new sense of community.”

He examines how the nation splintered into countless factions and how many assumed a localized and more limited identity. He argues that it was not just a loss of trust in leaders and institutions, but a loss of faith in any large structure of power that shifted focus away from a national agenda. Government and big businesses were unable to solve economic problems, while America’s international prestige in the wake of the war with Vietnam declined. Countless Americans lost faith in the democratic process. Only 52.3 percent of eligible citizens voted in the 1980 election. Considering that a third party candidate received seven percent of the total votes, Carroll emphatically concludes that “a majority of the citizenry rejected *both* Carter and Reagan!” Apathy and withdrawal characterized democratic participation in America.

Carroll’s survey and interpretation of events early in the decade are the strongest aspects of the book, especially his comprehensive coverage of the Watergate scandal. He digs into the monthly and sometimes weekly details of the two-year saga, showing how

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64 Ibid., 347.
mistrust of government leaders was not a sudden revelation, but a long, drawn-out unveiling of the numerous lies that all pointed to one conclusion: the public was regularly and deliberately deceived by its highest leaders. Carroll concludes that, along with continued and unexpected social change, the energy and economic crises combined to magnify the national malaise. People came to expect the worst from their leaders and institutions.

Carroll’s work exemplifies the difficulty of historical analysis of the 1970s: countless cultural and political trends veering in a variety of directions. Along with devoting chapters to race and class divisions, he addresses many of the trends that emerged during the decade, including environmental concerns, fears of technology, the growth of alternative medicine, and increased consciousness of one’s health. He argues that at the core of people’s concerns was a belief in the inadequacies of the federal government to set international policy, to manage the economy, or to protect its citizens and the natural world. Whether it was Nixon’s lies, the clumsy Ford, or the ineffectual Carter, pessimism reigned. People increasingly turned towards state, city, neighborhood, and local organizations in order to address their problems.65

Carroll’s work discussed a variety of struggles from early in the 1970s, among them the women’s movement. His coverage brings to life women’s daily battle for equality. He believes that in spite of a hostile national media, women made significant advances. While The New York Times occasionally printed articles by feminists, Carroll writes that “[i]n the regular news stories, women’s status remained unchanged: they were described by marital status, physical appearance, and dress.” Mainstream media coverage

65 Ibid., 315.
was sexist and made it difficult for the movement to overcome stereotyped images of women.  

Carroll devotes significant text to the hegemonic role of sexism in American culture. Dominant cultural interpretations of gender were inescapable and were reinforced by money and power. He writes how advertising in the media reinforced sexual stereotypes:

More than half the space in *The New York Times* carried advertising, other national magazines strove for a similar percentage, and one-fifth of television airtime transmitted commercials. These marketing techniques had proven enormously effective not only in selling products, but also in altering opinion about public issues. Yet advertisers had little incentive to change old sexual stereotypes.

Carroll analyzes a 1970 article titled “The Women’s Movement” which earnestly covered a rally and speech given by Betty Friedan. The piece was littered with inconsequential gender-specific information such as how Freidan’s hair was done, the glasses she wore, and the author’s judgment of the attractiveness of other participants. He uses this example to show one very common example of how women were covered in respected liberal media outlets. Chapters three and four of this dissertation address how *The New York Times* and other newspapers consistently undermined the importance of the subject matter and reinforced women as objects of physical scrutiny rather than as humans and equal members of society.

Carroll presents the individual experience as hand-in-hand with the national movement, making it clear that the personal and the political were inseparable, especially
within the women’s movement in the 1970s. He also argues that the movements and legislation adopted in the 1960s faced backlash when implemented in the 1970s. He detailed the various trends within the women’s movement, such as meeting in small groups, personal moments when a woman understood her shared oppression, reclaiming of the female body by disseminating scientific knowledge, pressing for legislation mandating equality, the depression of being trapped within the home, turning away from sexual relationships with men, and the media backlash that characterized women seeking empowerment as “bra-burners.” Although he does not identify it as the key to understanding the decade, from Carroll’s perspective the women’s movement was a significant feature.69


Ruth Rosen’s *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women’s Movement Changed America* does not present itself as a history of the 1970s, but as a sociological critique of the women’s movement. Rosen shows how the women’s movement drastically altered the nation’s laws, educational institutions, social patterns, and economy throughout the 1970s. Although Rosen’s book is a biased feminist critique of the women’s movement, her perspective is considered by other historians as essential to interpreting the period. Her work maintains an objective tone, but is colored by the experiences of someone who was a principal agent in the women’s movement.70

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Grounded in the political and media events of the period, Rosen’s work also focuses on the daily lives of the movement’s participants. Her personal involvement in the movement provides a visceral feel to the text. Many legislative, legal, and media battles took place throughout the 1970s, but it was the actions of countless individual agents and their personal “consciousness raising” that created societal wide change.\footnote{Ruth Rosen, \textit{The World Split Open} (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), xxi. For the term’s origins see Betty Friedan, \textit{The Feminine Mystique} (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1963).} It was the growing feminist consciousness that “split-open” the world.

From young professionals to isolated housewives, the process of gaining increased awareness was widespread. Women without physical access to the feminist movement had access through books and other publications, such as \textit{Ms. Magazine}. The magazine helped women to know that they were not alone. It described the exact moment when a woman realized that “her problems is not hers alone, but the result of living in a patriarchal society in which many assumptions remained unquestioned.” Also pointed out by Carroll, the “click” moment was a sudden flash of insight.\footnote{Ibid., 212.} Many activities engendered the “click” for women across the nation. From reading publications such as \textit{Ms. Magazine} to participating in discussions. Following the first Women’s Health Conference in 1971, years of pamphlets and notes were organized and published as \textit{Our Bodies, Ourselves}, which Rosen argues empowered countless women. The text challenged the hegemony of the male medical establishment by teaching women about their own biology, and once informed, women could then engage the medical
establishment as informed consumers, empowered to make their own reproductive choices.\textsuperscript{73}

Empowerment was key to the success of the women’s movement, according to Rosen. “Consciousness raising” was an educational experience that opened men’s and women’s minds to a shared oppression and inspired changes that even altered the power structure of language. As consciousness spread throughout American culture, new words and phrases entered the common vernacular. Rosen writes:

\textit{Ms.} had spurred one of the most dramatic changes in the English language: the use of \textit{Ms.} to replace Mrs. or Miss. Language usually changes rather slowly; however, by mid-decade, Ms. had already begun to appear on most business mail and applications.\textsuperscript{74}

Changes in language also reflected shifts in traditional power structures. In 1975 a group of women at Cornell University coined the term “sexual harassment” in order to expose the unacceptable behavior of a male professor.\textsuperscript{75} Other terms raised a variety of issues regarding the roles of women and the treatment of people of color—for instance, “sexual discrimination,” “affirmative action” and “racial discrimination” were terms that gained cultural currency and were increasingly addressed as legitimate social concerns. Like Carroll, Rosen argues that women faced significant discrimination from the media as they were judged, criticized, and often humiliated. The media was not very kind in its coverage of the women’s movement, as it was more likely to publicize sensational stories about the movement’s fringe members rather than engage the practical issues of liberation that applied to the mainstream. Within the women’s movement, extremists

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 176.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 214.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 186.
provided the media with images of militant lesbians who often came across as rude and demanding, thereby harming the public image of the movement. On the other hand, she points out how it was the fringe groups that produced a core of devoted feminists who were central to the establishment of new services for women. The militant activists staffed a growing infrastructure of shelters for battered women, rape crisis hot lines and health clinics.\footnote{Ibid., 174.}

By the end of the 1970s, the support structures once operated by fringe groups were fixtures of mainstream society. Women’s social services were thereafter funded through police departments, hospitals, and other establishment organizations. Although the women’s movement had lost momentum, there were other lasting gains. Language in America was permanently altered, legal definitions of sexual discrimination became encoded in judicial rulings, women won increased access to jobs and education through Title IX and equal employment laws, and they enjoyed more control over the biological functions of their bodies. The gendered landscape of American society was also permanently altered.


Drawing from his earlier works on Lyndon Johnson and the economic development of the American South from 1938-1980, Schulman presents the 1970s as the period when political, economic, and cultural leadership shifted south to the nation’s sunbelt. A southwesterly migration of people, jobs, and money from the 1960s through the 1970s proved sufficient to move political power south. Following Johnson’s election to
the White House, every president with the exception of Barack Obama, has been from the South.\textsuperscript{77}

Although Schulman’s argument is a noteworthy aspect of the transitions that took place in the 1970s, it proves only one of many defining features of the decade. His survey also provides detailed accounts of Nixon’s deceptions, the proliferation of civil rights afforded minorities, the countless individually focused movements and trends, battles among men and women, and the political emergence of the New Right. On a whole, the argument that American power shifted southwest is accurate but it is not a compelling unifying theme.

**Beth Bailey and David Farber, America in the 70s (2004)**

Beth Bailey and David Farber’s *America in the 70s* is a compilation of essays covering events, trends, and moods of the decade. Their introduction provides a brief overview of the era’s salient events and highlights how gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual identity all changed during the period. Debates and conflicts ensued as “people worried not only about race relations but also about the meaning of race, not only about women’s rights but also about women’s and men’s roles and the very meaning of gender.” For Bailey and Farber, it was a decade in which Americans wrestled with the meaning of their inherited values.\textsuperscript{78}

Financial troubles plagued the nation throughout the 1970s and exacerbated already-existing racial, sexual, and gender tensions. Bailey and Farber explain that “[h]ard economic times... gave a sharp edge to debates about identity, diversity, and

\textsuperscript{77} Schulman, *The Seventies*, 255-256.

\textsuperscript{78} Bailey and Farber, *America in the 1970s*, 5.
equality in American society.” The authors describe the period in personal terms, calling it “disorienting, frustrating and frightening,” and argue that on the whole the habits, morals and values of American society became much more liberal than in the previous decade. The authors are careful to explain that while the social, political and personal revolutions are attributed to the 1960s, the actual transformations took place largely in the 1970s. For example, “sex outside of marriage became the norm and illegal drugs became commonplace in middle America.” Complicating these new values was how people from all walks of life “struggled to define America and to secure a future on shifting cultural and economic ground.”

Specific chapters in the compilation address the 1976 national bicentennial celebration, affirmative action and other race based laws, along with labor and economic problems that helped push the traditionally Democratic blue-collar workers to the right on the political spectrum. It is Bailey’s chapter, “She ‘Can Bring Home the Bacon’: Negotiating Gender in Seventies America,” that engages the “revolution in gender roles.” Bailey emphasizes that just four percent of entering law students were female in 1960, but by 1974 the number had jumped to nineteen percent and that similar gains were made in medical school admissions. As the opportunities for women increased, the national economic situation saw a reversal in fortune for many male, uneducated, blue-collar laborers. The widespread deindustrialization of the era—countless manufacturing plants closed—resulted in the elimination of numerous well-paid jobs, the vast majority of

79 Ibid., 6.
80 Ibid., 4.
81 Ibid., 6.
82 Ibid., 8.
83 Ibid., 108.
which were held by men without advanced education. On the other hand, the service sector was one of very few employment centers that experienced job growth in the 1970s, but those jobs generally provided fewer hours, lower wage salaries, and were most often offered to women. Service sector employment did not replace manufacturing as a secure source of income for blue-collar workers nor did it provide an income able to support a family. Many American men felt that they had lost their job security, their incomes, and future opportunities.84

The transitioning job market was coupled with inflation that topped eleven percent in 1974, placing further pressure on families to have two wage earners. Many women simply had to work outside of the home in order to support a two-parent family. The percentage of women with small children working outside of the home increased fifty percent from the beginning to the end of the decade. The divorce rate also doubled between 1966 and 1976. Increased job opportunities for women, economic necessity, and changing family structures all forced many women to become wage earners, thereby altering the power balance among men and women and affecting women’s liberation.85 Bailey provides a clear overview of the public discourse on liberation, which sought to answer the question: “Are men and women essentially different or essentially the same?” But the issue, as she explains, was much more complicated. Bailey shows how the mainstream media failed seriously to address the question. By ignoring the plight of single working women and women of color, the media focused on married middle-class homemakers. Thus, many Americans did not take the issue of liberation seriously, as they

84 Ibid., 109. According to one estimate, in 1976 only forty percent of the nation’s jobs paid enough to support a family.
85 Ibid., 109.
failed to see how stay-at-home wives and mothers were oppressed. Media depictions of liberation failed to associate single mothers, minority women, or those living in poverty as the women who were most in need of liberation. The “middle-class homemaker” who was the common spokesperson for and image of women’s liberation failed to create a compelling case for someone in need of liberation.\(^8\)

Further, the media reinforced traditional notions of gender roles rather than discussing how men and women can be different biologically yet treated equally by the law. Equality was easily confused with the idea that women wanted to become men, or that only by assuming masculine traits could women be treated as equals. Talk of equality was often characterized by condescension, as few men wanted women to look or act like them. Bailey’s investigation of apprehension about gender equality reveals how in articles from *Ladies’ Home Journal, Time* and *Readers Digest*, strong women were interpreted by men as threatening. Countless articles told women how not to challenge their husband’s egos and warned of women becoming successful in business only by assuming masculine traits, thus becoming “bitches.”\(^9\) Popular interpretations of liberation according to Bailey commonly conflated equality with the loss of femininity and the assumption of masculine traits.

Colloquial conversation further undermined the goal of equality by often misinterpreting the definition of “liberation.” Bailey analyzes conventional conversation from the period in order to reveal how the term was actively distorted. Women’s liberation was commonly conflated with the ongoing sexual revolution and the question,

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\(^8\) Ibid., 118-119.  
\(^9\) Ibid., 120.
“Are you liberated?” came to mean: “Do you have sex?” When a man asked a woman
“Are you liberated?” he was slyly asking, “Do you put out?”

Some media outlets pushed the limits of men’s fears—according to Bailey—as they proposed that liberated women affected male impotence. In 1972, an *Esquire* article was titled, “What Is the New Impotence, and Who’s Got It?” and a *Vogue* title asked, “Is Women’s Lib Ruining Orgasms?” The *Vogue* author explicitly denied that women’s liberation had brought about male impotence, but admitted that men had convinced themselves that sex is rooted in some fixed relationship between men and women and that the rituals of seduction and the sexual act depend upon this opaque balance. While the author personally denied the existence of a mysterious sexual balance and argued that gender equality would not eliminate good sex, the author’s comments spoke deeply to the fears of countless men and women. Bailey explains that, “[f]or many Americans, the crux of the problem was that liberation freed women to compete with men and, in so doing, upset what they believed was the proper relationship between the sexes.”

Americans drew from cultural ideals surrounding romance and marriage to provide structure to their relationships, but with a strong call for equality and without a clear definition of it, these issues were left unresolved.

Although a working definition of equality remained beyond the abilities of the mainstream media to articulate, Bailey argues that respected news outlets began taking concrete steps towards equality. In 1974 the McGraw-Hill Book Company distributed new guidelines to their 8,000 authors and editorial staff. Without comment, the *New York*
Times Magazine published the new guidelines that began: “Men and women should be treated primarily as people, and not primarily as members of opposite sexes. Their shared humanity and common attributes should be stressed, not their gender differences.” The editorial guidelines created a framework in which women did not need liberation from men, so much as men and women needed liberation from the constrictive stereotypes and confining sex roles that limited their potential as humans. While some writers and news agencies implemented these guidelines immediately, many years would pass before they would be commonly applied.

McGraw-Hill was a major educational publisher and their new guidelines reinforced the linguistic transformations already underway. As new terms came into the common vernacular, the broader focus on a shared humanity was, in Bailey’s words, “becoming a central part of America’s public culture.” Advertisers grappled with the same issues as they sought to sell goods to men and women with a wide variety of political and social perspectives. Bailey argues that advertisers stood at the forefront of equality, because they were “increasingly aware... [of the necessity] to avoid sexism and the portrayal of women as idiots while assuaging or at least not increasing fears about changing gender roles that remained widespread even among many women in the workplace.” Advertisements needed to appeal to everyone and thus they were required to utilize marketing devoid of offensive sexism. Bailey posits that advertising agencies created the “superwoman” who was capable of anything. However, even an ideal woman had flaws. It was impossible for anyone, man or woman, to do everything. The

90 “‘Man!’ Memo from a Publisher” The New York Times, October 20, 1974.
91 Bailey and Farber, The Seventies, 123.
92 Ibid., 125.
superwoman was expected to earn a salary, care for the child, cook, clean, and keep herself sexually attractive. Bailey states that these unrealistic expectations placed undue burdens upon American women and created a new set of issues for women to address in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{93}

**David Frum (2000): How We Got Here—The 70’s: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse)**

A conservative blogger, contributing author to major magazines, speech writer for President George W. Bush, and past fellow of the American Enterprise Institute, David Frum provides a unique and ideologically infused perspective on the 1970s. *How We Got Here—The 70’s: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse)* is a combination of historical analysis, interpretive sociology, and polemic against the dominant academic approaches. He begins by affirming the widely accepted proposition that the 1960s was not the decade of sex, drugs, and rock’n’roll as memorialized in collective memory. He agrees that only a very small percentage of the population engaged these liberations during the 1960s. It was the 1970s when these social revolutions entered the mainstream.\textsuperscript{94} Like Bailey, Farber, and others, he sees the 1970s as the decade of revolution.

Frum interprets the many issues of the 1970s—from the economic conditions and loss in Vietnam to the changing family structures—as the price paid for a liberated society. He depicts the 1970s as a decade

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 125.

\textsuperscript{94} David Frum, *How We Got Here—The 70’s: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse)* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), xxi. Frum states that, “Only 5% of Americans had tried marijuana by as late as 1967,” and that “a majority of American brides still said they came to the alter as virgins in 1964.”
...blotted by the abandonment of a desperate ally to a ruthless enemy [South Vietnam to the communist North], the collapse of educational standards, the dissolution of the ideal of racial equality into rancorous arguments over special privileges... rampant drug abuse, the shattering of millions of families by divorce, and the savaging of America’s cities by crime and disorder.  

Frum blames liberal ideology and lifestyles for the problems of the 1970s, whereas others argue that the failures and deceptions perpetuated by the federal government and corporate institutions, broad international trends such as the rise in the price of oil and the advantages of manufacturing abroad, are what produced the difficulties of the era. Frum questions the purpose and consequences of personal liberation. Attacking liberal sensibilities, he adroitly avoids describing liberal failures in feminine terms by referring to them as a vast shift in the emotional climate, “a kind of global moistening.”  

Frum argues that it became culturally acceptable for men to cry, citing examples of presidents, heroes, and fathers. He argues that growing sensitivity to emotions—fostered by the liberal ideology—weakened American institutions at home and abroad. Frum fails to provide a causal connection between a personal embrace of emotions with America’s growing domestic problems, leaving his arguments shy of the standards required of historical scholarship.


Edward Berkowitz’s *Something Happened: A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies* addresses the major crises of the 1970s in a somewhat fractured narrative. He chronicles numerous political scandals and the inability of the so-called experts to
right the nation’s economic woes, which contributed to the resulting widespread loss of confidence. He defines the 1970s as 1973-1981, the period following the era of civil rights legislation and the beginning of consecutive recessions. Berkowitz chronicles how the problems inherited by the Ford and Carter administrations made it difficult to jump start the economy, solve the energy crisis, or bring the nation together.

Berkowitz spends considerable time on the implementation of civil rights era legislation that ended in 1972 with the passage of the Equal Opportunity in Education Act (Title IX). He chronicles the subsequent judicial rulings and application of civil rights laws that were hotly debated and that at times became a catalyst for physical violence. He writes, “Affirmative action and busing [of students] were sixties concepts but seventies issues.” The implementation of civil rights legislation created a continual blaze of controversy as “socially engineered solutions to society’s problems met greater opposition than they had in the flush postwar era.” Berkowitz argues that the era marked a movement away from the traditional institutions of stability and authority underpinning postwar prosperity, such as marriage, expert advice, and political leadership. Agreeing with other historians, Berkowitz argues that it was the 1970s, not the 1960s that changed patterns of behavior. In the 1960s people talked about women’s liberation, legalizing contraceptives and the declassification of homosexuality as a pathological disorder. In the 1970s, Congress passed the Equal

98 Ibid., 176.
99 Ibid., 232.
100 The American Psychiatric Association’s thirteen member board of trustees unanimously voted to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder on December 15, 1973. The American Psychological Association followed suit in 1975.
Rights Amendment, the Supreme Court approved abortion on demand, the nation’s schools restructured their programs to end disparities in treatment of boys and girls and gay rights became a matter of public record as homosexuality was decriminalized in many municipalities and no longer considered a disease by the medical establishment. The 1970s were so controversial because they witnessed the social changes of the previous decade being embraced by the masses. *Something Happened* shows how a multitude of issues shaped an era, but like the era itself, the work lacks overarching direction.  


Philip Jenkins appropriately identifies the major trends of the 1970s with an unparalleled sophistication and focus in *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America*. He repeatedly connects the loss of confidence in authority figures to the questioning of masculine virtues. The contentious renegotiation of gender during a period of economic crisis further undermined public confidence in the masculine post World War II leadership model. This loss of confidence was connected to notions of masculinity.

Jenkins shifts the 1970s to the period between 1975-1986 and explains, “*[s]o dramatic was the break in American history and culture around 1974-75 that it is difficult to think of ‘the seventies’ as a meaningful period.”*  

Jenkins separates the optimistic liberal movements of the 1960s from the backlash that followed. He defines the post civil

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rights revolution in culture and morals and the response by conservatives and the religious as the real 1970s. By redefining when the 1970s took place, Jenkins provides one convincing explanation for why the decade appears so fractured.

Many scholars turn to the year 1968 as the date when the idealistic dreams of the 1960s ended. It was in this year of that Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. were assassinated and when Americans watched live on television the corruption of their democratic process at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. It is commonly accepted that within a few years of those bleak events, the utopian visions fostered in the 1960s ended. However, Jenkins focuses on the development of the New Right and the shift away from the liberal values and the civil rights revolution of the 1960s that had been implemented by the mid-1970s. He argues that the New Right marked the true beginning of the 1970s. It was not until the mid-1970s that an effective coalition of groups took shape, aroused by both foreign and domestic issues involving race, rights, taxes, communism, terrorism, drugs, violence and threats to children and families. In many ways the New Right was a backlash to these political, cultural, and economic changes. Jenkins claims that, “...many aspects of [President Johnson’s] Great Society had become thoroughly institutionalized, as government and social agencies continued to expand. Social welfare expenditures by federal and state authorities rose from 11.7 percent of Gross National Product in 1965 to 20 percent in 1975.” As Americans looked for explanations why their lives were changing, including their personal and financial woes, the funding of and support by the federal government of socially liberal policies

103 Ibid., 25.
provided one obvious answer. With the economy contracting, Americans retreated from the liberal visions of the 1960s and the federal programs of the Great Society.\footnote{Ibid., 27.}

The New Right was one effective response to these fears. It was acutely aware of the social shifts underway and articulated the concerns of Americans without reverting to racist and sexist discourse. Jenkins applauds the success of the New Right, but is skeptical that a true acceptance of diversity had entered the American mainstream. Jenkins argues that a loose coalition of conservative perspectives manipulated social fears. He writes that the New Right “used a politics of substitution” and that they presented “policies in a socially acceptable form... free of overt racial references,” but nonetheless, essentially they were “manipulat[ing] racial fears.” The New Right recognized and shaped public issues, drew from widespread fears surrounding gender and race, and created a politically effective backlash against the social movements and policies of the 1960s.\footnote{Ibid., 8.}

Jenkins focuses on the hidden battles underpinning political discourse involving gender and sexuality. First, he states, “Deeply rooted issues of gender and sexuality influenced political behavior as much as did attitudes towards race and class.”\footnote{Ibid., 9.} Second, he explains how seemingly unrelated stories in the media were intertwined in the hearts and minds of the public. None of the scholars previously discussed address the sensational media stories involving serial murder or child abuse and pornography leading up to the 1980 presidential election. However, Jenkins makes this one of his foci by stating that “violent crime was a national obsession of the late 1970s,” and “the mass
media had saturated the public with images of violence in its most pernicious and sadistic forms.”

Jenkins shows how contemporary news coverage is very important to understanding political events. As gender underpinned mid-1970s discourse, violent and often sexually explicit crimes provided the interpretative context for issues of gender through the early 1980s. Jenkins connects the apparent threats to family and gender with the sudden changes in the economy, arguing that “debates over taxes and rights involved themes of masculinity as much as race.”


Levine’s close reading of American television from the 1970s adds an important layer to the era’s cultural debates. Her work reveals how sexual innuendo pervaded American television, and argues that, a “sexualized popular culture became a taken-for-granted element of everyday life.” However, she reminds the reader that while television provided a venue for the negotiation of the new sexual culture, it typically presented a more restrained version of the changes taking place in society. Television usually endorsed sexual and gender hierarchies, but it offered the space to discuss these issues, and at times challenged dominant values. Due to the constraints of the Federal Communication Commission and the interests of corporate advertisers, television shows were “a more restrained version of the changes taking place in the world around it.”

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107 Ibid., 15.
108 Ibid., 20.
110 Ibid., 5.
111 Ibid., 5.
While television was broadcasting a sanitized version of the sexual revolution, Levine shows how television was also sharing a variety of versions of the same revolution. Levine’s work seeks a wider understanding of television content that includes the motivations behind productions as well as the consumers’ response to material. It was through the commercial enterprise of television that most Americans were regularly exposed to the many aspects of a consumer-friendly version of the sexual revolution. In terms of debates in the public discourse surrounding women’s sexuality, gay rights, monogamy, or rape, television seldom addressed the issues directly. Nevertheless, television programs made these issues a common presence and particularly in the case of women’s sexuality, it became a ubiquitous theme.\(^{112}\)

Levine approaches 1970s television from a handful of specific perspectives that include examining what was prohibited, the impact of content on young people, female heroines, sexual innuendo, and rape as a topic and plot line. For example, nudity and lingerie-clad models were prohibited, while condom ads, although controversial, if conservatively packaged were acceptable. Public anxieties raised by the sexual revolution created great concern around many issues, including the impact of sex and violence on young viewers. At the same time heroines in action roles who served double duty as sex symbols served to moderate tensions between female empowerment and sexual objectification. Of these sexily clad women, Levine writes that, “television made the changing gender roles endorsed by the women’s liberation movement seem less disruptive and less revolutionary.”\(^{113}\)

\(^{112}\) Ibid., 7.
\(^{113}\) Ibid., 13.
Television provided female superheroes and action figures that inspired debates around what it meant to be woman, while it also served as a source of innuendo-driven humor. Sexual topics could be addressed indirectly through jokes without directly challenging heterosexuality, monogamy, and other traditional values. Again, television provided a censored view of the real world sexual revolution, including a shifting view of rape from a crime of passion to one of violence. Levine delves into rape plots because they also gave voice to the pain associated with sex in addition to allowing Americans to debate the meaning of rape. She argues that rape plots and the intense dramatic experiences that they offered, voiced “the confusion, fear, and excitement so many people felt in the wake of the sexual revolution.” Thus, television’s handling of sex in the 1970s presented a negotiation between traditional values and challenges brought to them by the sexual revolution.

Disco: Negotiating Gender and Sexuality

From the mid-1970s through the early 1980s disco music and culture stood as a mainstream phenomenon. Several recent works explore how the genre was much more than a music and dance craze. Diana L. Mankowski’s "Gendering the Disco Inferno: Sexual Revolution, Liberation, and Popular Culture in 1970s America" (University of Michigan dissertation 2010) presents disco as one expression of gender and sexual uncertainty. Disco music and culture offered a venue for the public enactment of gender and sexual tensions. Mankowski’s work shows how the genre provided a public forum for men and women, both gay and straight, to negotiate personal and public relationships.

114 Ibid., 15.
The sexual revolution, feminism, gay liberation, Black Power, and human potential could all be explored through dress, physical movement, and social interaction, but remain outside of a political context. More specifically, for females, “Disco offered women an erotically charged, assertive expression of sexuality influenced by the contentious relationship between feminism and sexual freedom.” Its ability to provide space for individual expression and cultural debate make disco historically significant.

Alice Echols’ *Hot Stuff: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture in 1970s America*, (2010) also places disco at the center of the ongoing sexual revolution. Echols argues that “Disco played a central role in...” the process by which many “gay men, African Americans, and women ditched predictable social scripts.” Disco provided a public forum without espousing a specific agenda. Echols focuses on disco’s role in expressing a shifting sexuality. She notes how its move into X-rated territory and its attention to women’s sexual pleasure ignited heated debates. Disco was unmistakably part of the process of sexual liberalization—which also included the mainstream acceptance of pornography—that expanded the definition of acceptable social and sexual activity.

Both Echols and Mankowski reject the claim that disco was superficial, boring, and repetitive. The abrupt rejection of and backlash to disco was much more complicated.

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116 Mankowski, “Gendering the Disco Inferno,” xi, 9, and 36. “Human potential” is used as an encompassing term to describe the various self-empowerment movements of the time that espoused devotion to oneself and personal quests.
117 Ibid. xi.
119 Ibid., xxv.
120 For an example of how disco blurred the lines between hetero and homosexual normative behavior see Mankowski’s discussion of the Village People, “Gendering the Disco Inferno,” 433-44.
One explanation is that music industry professionals believed that they could create new and more profitable genres of music by actively perpetuating these opinions as early as 1979.\textsuperscript{121} The full story is much more complicated, as these negative sentiments also reflected anger and frustration with America’s changing sexual and racial rules. The backlash expressed undercurrents of racism, homophobia, and sexism. Mankowski notes how the backlash against disco correlated with a growing backlash against feminism and the rise of New Right conservatism.\textsuperscript{122}

**Conclusion: Changing Relationships and Unresolved Problems**

The nation’s workforce, education, economy and familial practices changed drastically in the 1970s. New lifestyles that varied from communes, cohabitation without marriage, and divorce became common. Abortion and birth control became legal and widely available while many sexual acts were decriminalized. New words and phrases from “sexual harassment” and “affirmative action” to “Ms.” entered the lexicon and expressed changing values. Even the definition of existing words changed. In 1977 the Supreme Court ruled that the definition of a “family” under the law could not be restricted to the traditional “nuclear family.”\textsuperscript{123} This allowed any two people living together, even two women or two men, to be defined as a family and thus eligible for public aid. Legally re-defining a single term impacted countless lives by increasing the population eligible for government housing and other support programs. Redefining a term could also prove divisive, angering many who did not believe that the government should be supporting non-traditional living arrangements. Emotions flared whenever

\textsuperscript{121} Echols, *Hot Stuff*, 201-212 & Mankowski, “Gendering the Disco Inferno,” 112.

\textsuperscript{122} Mankowski, 3.

\textsuperscript{123} Langstein, “Constitutionally Protected Notions of Family.”
government programs and legal decisions impacted personal lives and appeared to support the values or interests of one group over another.

The decade began with a series of failures, setbacks, and betrayals. It weathered the difficult implementation of protections and opportunities to minorities with Title IX, affirmative action, and other programs mandated by the Federal Government. It concluded with a surge of political activism by conservatives. Historians have utilized a number of techniques to interpret the decade that ranged from blaming national failures on individualism, focusing on the widespread loss of confidence in authority and institutions, to changing the beginning and end of the decade in order to better accommodate political and social trends. The decade is complicated and will likely remain beyond the ability of a single phrase or perspective to provide a neat summary.

The problems that erupted in the 1970s remain largely unresolved. The nation continues to debate environmental issues, energy security and stability remains elusive, while people are weary of corporations and their government. Perhaps it is not exactly what happened but how it happened that defines the era. The historical consensus regards the period as divisive. As the liberal visions and lifestyles of the 1960s became common features of the 1970s, Americans debated everything. From environmental protections, oil production, and affirmative action to birth control and abortion. The salient feature was how these debates were carried out and the underlying values behind the positions. As Levine convincingly argues about 1970s television, sexual innuendo was ubiquitous, and the handling of sex presented a negotiation between the traditional values of the past and the progressive values of the ongoing sexual revolution.
In chapters four and five I will take her argument one step further and show how the presentation of the news in four of the nation’s daily papers is infused with this tension and at times informed by an antagonistic gender binary. Men and women were often presented in gender specific terms, stereotypical images, and women were regularly objectified for the purposes of advertising. There was an underlying personal and professional tension between men and women. The theme of men and women at odds with each other colored news coverage and the cultural discourse on a variety of topics. Themes and topics that addressed men and women’s issues became widespread as the nation became increasingly aware that personal, professional, and political issues were interwoven.

The following, chapter two, provides an original biographical perspective of Senator William Proxmire. It will set the stage for his participation in the first Golden Fleece debate, which featured him at odds with two female professors. The chapter focuses on his professional life, but will speculate about his personal life from a handful of written clues, indicating his personal values regarding women, and thus informing the discussion of the national Golden Fleece debate in chapters four and five.
Chapter 2

William Proxmire: Rage Against the “Federal Love Machine”

I believed when we arrived in Washington—and this belief has been strengthened as the years have fled—that it is a Senator’s job to legislate ...[and] to thoroughly understand what is happening throughout the world and with pen and voice educate and inform.”
--Ellen Proxmire, One Foot In Washington, 1963

My choice for the Golden Fleece Award... [is] for spending almost $500,000 in the last seven years to determine under what conditions rats, monkeys and humans bite and clench their jaws. The funding of this nonsense makes me almost angry enough to scream and kick or even clench my jaw. It’s time for the federal government to get out of this monkey business.”
--Senator Proxmire, Press Release, April 1975

Waste feeds no hungry children, clothes no one in need, nor builds any housing for the homeless.
--Senator Proxmire, Newsletter to constituents, July 1978.

Introduction

This chapter provides a biographical overview of Senator Proxmire’s life, with a focus on his political career that peaked in the mid-1970s. William Proxmire lost three consecutive gubernatorial elections before succeeding Joseph McCarthy as Wisconsin’s second senator in 1957. As a member of Congress, Proxmire was largely ineffective in his first full term in office, 1959-1964. However, by the mid-to-late 1960s. He had inherited power, including leadership positions on several important Senate committees. He had acquired a productive and knowledgeable staff that allowed him to be more effective. By the mid-1970s he had become nationally popular and was considered an expert on a wide variety of topics and was regularly consulted by the national media for his opinion on economic issues.

Throughout his career Proxmire was a unique, if not outright eccentric, politician. He was neither guided by his party’s platform, constrained by ideology, nor influenced
by special interest groups and lobbyists. He was respected for his detailed research and his ability to inform his fellow senators and the public about important issues with well articulated arguments on the Senate floor, carefully orchestrated committee hearings, and humorous press releases. Proxmire believed that his role as a senator was thoroughly to understand all components of an issue and then to educate and inform the public.¹

A Driven Youth

Edward William Proxmire embodied a brand of optimism that was specifically American. From an early age he was idealistic about what could be accomplished, and he believed in the ability of individuals to shape their identity and determine their destiny with hard work. His political career was driven by a tireless work ethic that he had cultivated since adolescence. In his early teens, Proxmire created a daily regimen with parallels to the long tradition of self-improvement in American literature. From the “Daily Schedule” in Benjamin Franklin’s Autobiography to the “Schedule” followed by the fictional lead of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby, Proxmire also outlined an ideal day.² At age thirteen, while on vacation at his family’s lake house, Proxmire developed a written regimen: “Up at 6:30 in the morning; a swim; breakfast; pump water for the house for forty-five minutes; sail or canoe for an hour or so; another swim; lunch; reading for an hour; an eight mile hike in the woods; return to the cabin; swim; have

² Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Franklin: The Autobiography and Other Writings, “ (Oxford, Oxford University Press, reissued 2008), 97. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons: 1925), 173. There is no evidence that Proxmire read either book and it is highly unlikely that Proxmire read The Great Gatsby before composing his daily schedule since it was published in 1925 and he would have been only ten at the time. In addition, The Great Gatsby was not as popular as Fitzgerald’s earlier novels and was not widely read until the 1940s when the United States military printed and distributed copies to American troops during World War II.
dinner; read; and to bed.” Carrying out such a physically rigorous training at a young age was a testament to Proxmire’s work ethic, even in his youth.³

Of German ancestry, one possible reason for the young Proxmire’s work ethic, his father was born in Ohio and completed medical school in 1904. Proxmire senior married in 1912 before fathering three children: Theodore in 1913, Edward William in 1915, and Adele in 1917.⁴ Born into affluence, William Proxmire was provided countless opportunities for self-improvement. He attended the finest preparatory schools and then universities, and had access to the best athletic clubs and sporting teams. Proxmire’s focus on physical development when he was young transitioned to more practical skills as he aged, such as public speaking and speed reading.⁵ Edward William Proxmire, the second son of a physician, became a political heavyweight and a national economic authority who served thirty years in the United States Senate with few blemishes on his record.

**Formal Education**

Proxmire was well aware of the advantages that his father’s profession provided his family, admitting later in life, “We were a very privileged and lucky lot.”⁶ His youth was characterized by opportunity and luxuries only available to the upper class, such as a summer vacation home, a family cook and chauffeur, private schools, and memberships in private athletic clubs. Rather than relax into a life of affluence, the young Proxmire had absorbed from his father a very strong work ethic and accepted his father’s belief that

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⁴ Ibid., 16.
⁵ See Franklin’s “Examination of the Day.”
⁶ Proxmire, as quoted in Sykes, *Proxmire*, 18.
“it was morally wrong, as well as inefficient, to be awake and not at work.”

Determination and stamina characterized Proxmire’s work ethic from an early age. According to his only biographer, Jay G. Sykes, when Proxmire set his mind to a task he did so with a “Spartan regimen.”

Sykes, an associate professor of mass communications at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, published in 1972 a friendly biography tinted with nostalgia. The cover is a black and white photograph of a spry but balding Proxmire jogging along a wintery street. Proxmire was an avid jogger and when in Washington, D.C. he would jog from his house to the Capitol early each morning for work. Sykes engages a few controversies, but on the whole presents Proxmire in a glowing light. From his athletic training and academic study that began at an early age, to his scrupulous ethics, financial disclosures, and repayments to the federal government to the cent for services received while serving in the United States Senate, Sykes presents Proxmire as a politician who could be trusted to serve the nation, a man who stood above corruption.

Although Proxmire credits his father for his work ethic, these values were not inherited by his older brother Theodore, who, Proxmire said, “never worked very hard in school or tried very hard in athletics.” (By contrast, the younger Proxmire stood out at boarding school by reputedly receiving more As than any other student in the school’s history). Proxmire would succeed in life because of a dogged work ethic, whereas his older brother exploited his natural intelligence and gregarious personality. Theodore enjoyed speed and having fun, souping up his high school graduation gift, a new Buick

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7 Sykes, Proxmire, 16.
8 Ibid., 19.
9 Ibid., 22.
10 Ibid., 20.
convertible, and piloting planes while on the intercollegiate stunt flying team at Yale. A
daredevil in the sky, Theodore died in 1939 at the age of twenty-five in a P-36 Army
fighter when his plane crashed during training.¹¹

Proxmire also attended Yale, where he majored in English literature, but he was
not a socialite like his older brother. Proxmire said that he did the same kinds of activities
as other undergraduates, such as dating and partying, but much less of both because he
devoted his time to studying and training. He began boxing and playing football in high
school and his training regime and dedication allowed him to earn varsity letters in both
sports at Yale. An individual sport in which diligence and heart often outweigh talent,
boxing proved his excellent sportsmanship. Although initially refused a position on the
football team, his work ethic and resilience won over the head coach who played
Proxmire in a single down of a regular season game, thus garnering him a varsity letter in
a second sport.¹²

Upon graduating from Yale, Proxmire attended the Harvard School of Business
and specialized in financial management. Undistracted by athletics, he concentrated on
studying and graduated in the top ten percent of his class.¹³ This led to a prestigious
internship at J. P. Morgan and Company in New York City. Entertaining the idea of a
career in politics, he took a public speaking course at Columbia University and then
headed to the streets to practice. He was impressed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s
performance as president, but he opposed FDR’s third term on principle. Thus, in 1940
he delivered several dozen “soap box” speeches for the Republican Wendell Willkie in

¹¹ Ibid., 22.
¹² Ibid., 20-21.
¹³ Ibid., 23.
the streets of New York City. After only six months with J. P. Morgan, and with World War II looming, Proxmire enlisted in the military.\textsuperscript{14}

**World War II: Military Service**

According to his personal account, Proxmire said that his love of work allowed him to enjoy basic training, usually the bane of existence for new recruits.\textsuperscript{15} Proxmire described this period as a “really happy period of my life…. I loved the work and the exercise and the competition and even K.P. [kitchen police]…. I liked the hard work—even working on pots and pans—as a change of pace, but I wouldn’t want to do it every day.”\textsuperscript{16} Proxmire kept to a daily work out schedule his entire life. In his 60s, he would still wake up at 6:00 a.m., do one-hundred sit-ups and leg-lifts, one-hundred push-ups, followed by breathing and back exercises. Then he jogged the nearly five miles to the Capitol where he made himself a simple high-protein breakfast in his office. Proxmire maintained strict study and workout practices throughout his life.\textsuperscript{17}

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Proxmire found himself in the Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) for three and a half years. His first post was at the Sixth Service Command Headquarters in Chicago, where he conducted loyalty checks and investigations. Jokes abounded regarding “military” and “intelligence” and the CIC was comically referred to as “Christ, I’m Confused.”\textsuperscript{18} The lack of reason and common sense associated with military protocol guided Proxmire away from a career in the military and served as an early foray into the world of government inefficiency and waste. Motivated

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 47.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 26.
by his continual penchant for self-improvement, he made the most of his time by taking public speaking courses at Northwestern University. 19

In late 1944, he was assigned to Arlington Hall near Washington, D.C., and was commissioned as a second lieutenant. Proxmire took advantage of the proximity to the Capitol to further his political and public speaking education by listening to debates on the Senate floor. The itch to explore politics had been nagging Proxmire for years and finally, at the age of twenty-nine, his conviction to enter politics solidified. 20 His tireless work ethic and precise scheduling later proved an asset on the campaign trail, especially during in his first election in which the public viewed him as both an outsider and the underdog. 21

Even when a career in politics was years away, Proxmire made a well informed decision that drew from his work, educational, and military experiences. His time in the military showed him numerous flaws in its structure and his short stint on Wall Street led him to believe that the financiers “no longer made the decisions that mattered.” 22 Proxmire later said, “I soon discovered that the vital decisions—the decisions as to the way our economy and our life move—are made in Washington—and that was where the real opportunity was to influence American life… where the big decisions are made and where a man can make the biggest contribution.” 23 In 1946, Proxmire returned to Harvard and studied at the Graduate School of Public Administration. Within weeks of starting school he met his future first wife Elsie Rockefeller, a great granddaughter of the

19 Ibid., 26
20 Ibid., 26.
21 Proxmire, One Foot in Washington, 152-153.
22 Sykes, Proxmire, 27.
23 Ibid., 27.
famous William A. Rockefeller. In addition, Elsie Rockefeller’s stepfather was George A. Sloan, a member of the Board of Directors of United States Steel and of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. Proxmire and Elsie Rockefeller married in September 1946.24

Proxmire used his time at Harvard to continue practicing public speaking and formally study politics. He also served as a teaching fellow while working on his degree. His thesis investigated the relationship between U.S. presidents and their cabinets.25 Upon completion of his Master’s degree in 1948, he taught political theory and comparative government at Harvard. As a side job he also lectured to service clubs throughout New England regarding the 1948 election. His non-partisan talks on the pending presidential race led him to state “that on all the political problems, the Republicans had reasons not to act, while the Democrats worked at solving the problems.” He commented that this “made a tremendous impression…. Democrats came up with answers, while the Republicans always seemed to give explanations that nothing ought to be done, and the system would take care of itself.”26 Proxmire thus permanently—although loosely—affiliated himself with the Democratic Party. Proxmire was an independent and principled thinker who did not support the leadership of his party when he thought it to be against his constituents’ or the nation’s best interest. He gained a reputation in the Senate for refusing to play the political game of voting with his party or trading votes.27

24 Ibid., 27.
25 Ibid., 29.
26 Ibid., 31.
Seeking a Political Career: The Newspaper Man

Proxmire showed strong academic performance at Harvard and completed all of the requirements for a Ph.D. except a dissertation. He had learned to research, write, and analyze, but was impatient to begin the journey into public life, particularly his career in journalism, which he viewed as a necessary step towards politics. Proxmire knew that it would be much easier to run for elected office as a respected voice within the community and that few jobs could accomplish this quicker than that of political reporter or editor. He systematically examined the nation in order to determine where a political newcomer with a Democratic affiliation could succeed, first eliminating the larger cities with too much competition. He believed that he would likely be overlooked within a large newspaper and similarly passed over within a well-established political organization. He looked for states with smaller populations, specifically for cities that had populations supporting mid-sized newspapers. He sought out newspapers with circulations that ranged between 15,000 and 75,000. He reasoned that circulations of less than 15,000 would provide insufficient exposure for an upstart, while papers with circulations above 75,000 would prove difficult for a newcomer to make a name with the local readers.28

In early 1949, Proxmire wrote to approximately fifty newspapers that met his criteria. He inquired about positions as an editorial writer or investigative reporter focusing on politics. He finally accepted the position as political and labor reporter at forty dollars per week from The Capital Times in Madison, Wisconsin. Founded in 1917, the paper had a widespread reputation as an independent journal and was the defiant voice of Wisconsin progressivism.

28 Sykes, Proxmire, 31.
In addition to the size of the population being within his parameters, Proxmire also accepted the position in Wisconsin’s capitol because, as he stated, the state appeared to be “the least inhospitable to an outsider looking to carve out a political career.” Proxmire’s reading of Wisconsin’s political situation was shrewd. The state’s Democratic party was not dominated by a strong central party organization and was nearly inconsequential until the mid-1940s. In 1946, Wisconsin Progressives reunited with the Republican party, thereby healing a rift that began in 1934. With Progressives and Republicans united, the Democratic party once again became the viable second party. However, the state’s Democratic party remained sufficiently weak throughout the 1940s and 1950s to permit an outsider to carve out a political role.

Progressive ideology held that citizens should have maximum access to government’s decision-making process and remained Wisconsin’s dominant political ideology. The Progressive party mobilized businessmen, professionals, and intellectuals against industrial monopolies, attacking the political patronage and the concentrated power of political bosses. It also sought to remove barriers between people and their government. In 1903, Wisconsin had become the first state to adopt the direct primary, thus allowing citizens to select their own candidates rather than those appointed by political organizations. This fostered a unique political tradition in Wisconsin, as the state’s elected officials commonly strayed from the direction of their national leaders, were not swayed by party agendas, and were able to set out their own platforms.

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29 Ibid., 32.
30 Ibid., 38.
As Proxmire predicted, *The Capital Times* offered a steady platform to investigate, discuss and challenge contemporary political issues. He was a good investigative reporter and leveraged his academic skills to vet out corruption. His background in finance allowed him to analyze complex documents and his first significant exposé targeted a county judge for failing to document all of his taxable income over a three-year period. More scandalous than the income tax omissions were the undeclared payments from a private bus company. The judge accepted a fee from the company in exchange for his assistance in obtaining a local franchise license. Many, including Proxmire, considered the payment a political bribe. The story was placed on the front page and represented an early example of Proxmire’s public exposure of government corruption and financial mismanagement. His newspaper co-workers characterized his work as advocate reporting, always supporting a cause, rather than objective journalism. It is likely that he would not have considered himself non-partisan, as he was simultaneously writing press releases for the State Assembly’s Democratic caucus.\footnote{Sykes, *Proxmire*, 43.}

Proxmire did not last long at Wisconsin’s progressive paper before conflicts with upper management led him to take a position at the *Union Labor News* later the same year, 1949. He first garnered the ire of management for his attempts to unionize all departments within the paper and further upset the publisher when, as part of the labor negotiations, he conducted a thorough review of the paper’s financial records. For a young man with political aspirations, keeping on the good side of the publisher of a leading paper might seem more important than a personal crusade. However, Proxmire
always did what he determined to be right and did not back down. Management allowed Proxmire to have his way on the labor and financial issues, but after further disagreements with the publisher, Proxmire left *The Capital Times*.  

Proxmire moved on to become the business manager at the *Union Labor News*, a Madison publication of the American Federation of Labor. Writing and broadcasting their weekly radio program, “Labor Sounds Off,” satisfied his desire for a public forum and advocacy. Undaunted when confronting injustice, Proxmire was also learning the art of publicity. In his first broadcast he relayed a court case in which a man intent on breaking a strike drove his Lincoln through the picket line. The man on trial was the wealthy and influential publisher of the *Wisconsin State Journal*, the state’s other leading paper. While the charges of assault and battery were dismissed by the judge, Proxmire stated in his live show that the event provided “insight into the character of the owner of the *State Journal*. ” It took Proxmire less than a year in Madison to earn the enmity of the publishers of Wisconsin’s two leading papers.

*The Capital Times* and *Wisconsin State Journal* episodes were quintessential examples of Proxmire’s mores. Repeatedly through his career, he saw a problem and without regard to who or what was involved, he addressed it, and his flair for publicity grew with practice. These examples reveal a man with political ambitions who did not make calculated decisions. Proxmire decided what was right and followed that course directly with little consideration given to potential fallout. There are very few examples of Proxmire changing course or allowing his direction to be swayed by political pressure.

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33 Ibid., 45.  
34 Ibid., 45.  
35 Ibid., 46.
Those few times came with great personal pain and are discussed later in this chapter. His decisions were not guided by the tides of public opinion, the result of backdoor deals, or from pressure by special interest groups.36

**Running for a Seat in the Wisconsin Legislature**

Early the next year, in 1950, Proxmire publically announced his intention to run for the state assembly. Without vindictiveness, his old employer devoted nearly 1,000 words to his candidacy, which greatly increased Proxmire’s visibility. Although the piece featured disclosures of Proxmire’s familial ties to the Rockefellers and Sloans, unflattering associations to the residents of the rural district and to progressives, the coverage was not particularly damaging. Nevertheless, it did little to support him either.37 Proxmire campaigned full-time for eight months, visiting every house and farm in twenty of the thirty-three Assembly district precincts, and personalizing his interactions with voters. He received 1,885 votes—a 215-vote margin—enough to win the Democratic nomination. In a heavily Democratic district, he won the general election with nearly a two-to-one margin.38

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36 Donald A. Ritchie. “Interview with Howard E. Shuman” October 1, 1987. *Senate History Resources*, 432. [http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/oral_history/Howard_E_Shuman.htm](http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/oral_history/Howard_E_Shuman.htm) (November 10, 2011). “I used to say there were two kinds of senators: the issue-oriented senators and the power-oriented senators. Power-oriented senators were people who twist arms in the cloakroom, who get on the pork-barrel committees and give out favors for favors in return, the way in which the Dixiecrats ran the Senate for years, but who when they leave the Senate, I think, are largely forgotten. What do they stand for, except a few public works projects and installations in their states? Those are important, but in the long run they don’t change the face of history. Then I think there are the issue-oriented senators, in which category I put both Proxmire and [Paul] Douglas, who are interested in making the country a better place in a variety of ways.”


38 “Three Dems Win Assembly Seats in Dane Vote,” *The Capital Times*, November 8, 1950, 1. The article notes that Proxmire won 8,024 votes and his Republican challenger Stout, won 4,132.
Proxmire’s first official act as a state assemblyman sought to eliminate a budget item that he believed was wasteful. Each year the state officials allocated a few hundred dollars to purchase themselves commemorative pens. Proxmire saw this as an unnecessary job perk and a waste of taxpayers’ money, but his bill was rejected by the Wisconsin legislature.\textsuperscript{39} As the only Democrat on the Taxation Committee, Proxmire introduced numerous proposals for tax reforms. \textit{The Capital Times} raved about Proxmire’s performance, and even conservative political pundits were impressed by his legislative abilities. He continued on his political journey to higher office despite repeated losses and never relinquished the crusade against governmental privilege and waste.\textsuperscript{40}

\textbf{Campaigning for Governor: Attacking McCarthyism}

In 1952 there were few Democrats willing to challenge the popular Republican Governor, Walter J. Kohler, Jr., whose father was a former governor as well. The family name was also known for its manufacturing of plumbing fixtures and power generators which employed thousands throughout the state. Experienced and viable Democratic candidates knew that the campaign could not be won. With little chance of unseating Kohler, Proxmire told a confidant at the time, “I’m going to run and lose in 1952, and run and lose in 1954, then I’ll win in 1956.”\textsuperscript{41} Proxmire’s official announcement to run was made in March 1952, as he stated, “I shall campaign in every precinct, ward, village and township in the state.”\textsuperscript{42} His rhetoric did not exaggerate his efforts.

\textsuperscript{39} Sykes, \textit{Proxmire}, 50.  
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 52. Newspaper article by John Wyngaard is quoted by Sykes, but the publication details are not available.  
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 53.  
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 54.
With defeat a foregone conclusion, Proxmire still campaigned with all the moxie he successfully used in unseating the incumbent for the state assembly seat in 1950. Proxmire knew that he was building political capital, slowly becoming Wisconsin’s leading Democratic candidate. With little help from his party (as it was still little more than a shell of an organization), his campaign was exceedingly frugal, funded by his personal savings and contributions made by family and friends. He depended upon his wife’s secretarial work, stayed at Young Men’s Clubs of America when far from home and ate peanut butter sandwiches. In the race for governor, Proxmire’s biggest opponent was obscurity. Few knew of him outside his assembly district and he struggled to gain news coverage and voter recognition. The campaign taught him just how non-existent the Democratic organization was at the time.\(^{43}\)

Proxmire’s inability to generate significant attention for his campaign in Wisconsin led him to seek publicity elsewhere. At the 1952 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, he served as an alternate delegate, made a principled stand, and garnered much needed publicity. The delegates from Texas were divided and Proxmire delivered an impassioned televised speech demanding that Texas’s delegates pledge their support of the Democratic ticket. In the interest of party unity, the motion was rejected by the convention. Nonetheless the event helped increase Proxmire’s profile. The front page banner headline of *The Capital Times* read, “Proxmire, Leader for ’Loyalists’ Loses[.].”\(^{44}\)

In Wisconsin, Proxmire’s gubernatorial campaign focused on attacking the policies of the Republican leadership, including its under-taxing of the railroads and banks, property tax

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 56.

increases, and the failure to contain lobbying. Proxmire made a general call for economy in government.

Most controversial in 1952 was his campaign against “the evil that is McCarthyism... and the national disgrace that is Senator McCarthy.” Proxmire made a point to attack McCarthyism. Although within two years Senator Joseph McCarthy would become widely unpopular throughout the nation, Proxmire’s campaign against McCarthyism in 1952 was well ahead of public opinion, and was born out of his principled stance. Proxmire believed that McCarthy’s tactics were destructive to American democracy. By his own account, Proxmire drove some 3,500 miles and shook approximately a quarter of a million hands while campaigning for governor in 1952; however, he only won 37.2 percent of the vote in the general election. The diligent worker returned to the campaign trail the morning after the election, shaking hands at factory gates as they opened, thanking workers for their support. The 1954 election was only two years away.

Reliable details about Proxmire’s private life are few, but it is clear that his work ethic and ceaseless campaigning were a burden upon his family. In addition, he had spent the family’s personal savings and mortgaged its home in order to fund his 1952 and 1954 campaigns. His wife Elsie Rockefeller was responsible for the bulk of the campaign’s secretarial work. She was also charged with caring for two young children, three dogs, a bird, a vegetable garden, and the do-it-yourself remodel of their older eight-room farm house. Their rural house further isolated Elsie Rockefeller from friends, social activities

45 Sykes, Proxmire, 61.
46 Ibid., 58-63.
and child care assistance. Being the wife of a politician was a difficult job. Proxmire’s number one priority was to win elected office, and personal concerns were a distant second. It appeared that he did not recognize how his ambition affected his relationship with his wife. Chapters three, four, and five will address how by the mid-1970s personal and professional issues were often presented as interconnected and as significant aspects of political debates.

Proxmire continued to seek votes and delivered approximately 200 speeches throughout the state before officially announcing his candidacy for governor in early 1954. With little outside help, Proxmire was virtually a one-man campaign. He continued his individualist approach throughout the campaign, rarely consulting with others. Without advisers, he developed his positions and wrote his own speeches. Democrats were gaining more support in Wisconsin and the state Democratic party fielded another qualified candidate to challenge Proxmire in the primary. Years of campaigning had increased Proxmire’s profile significantly and he easily won the primary. He was the Democratic favorite. In the general election, Proxmire’s focus was to criticize current Governor Kohler’s policies along with the red-baiting tactics of McCarthy.

Between 1952 and 1954, the tide had turned against McCarthy, Wisconsin’s senior senator. Proxmire supported the “Joe Must Go” campaign which gathered over 350,000 signatures in order to force a recall election of the Wisconsin senator. McCarthy became nationally unpopular by mid-1954, following several episodes of the television documentary series See It Now hosted by Edward R. Murrow. McCarthy

47 Ibid., 65.
48 Ibid., 68.
49 Ibid., 71.
sought to refute the March episodes and appeared on the show again in early April. He
caused further harm to his reputation by attacking the widely popular Murrow with
accusations of communist affiliations. He also earned the enmity of Senator Lyndon B.
Johnson, who set in motion Congress’s censure of McCarthy. Unfavorable press
continued with McCarthy’s inquiry of communism known as the Army-McCarthy
hearings during April and May 1954, which received live daily coverage by the American
Broadcasting Company (ABC). The Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations,
chaired by McCarthy, aggressively questioned Army witnesses. The committee’s final
report that was inconclusive, but the abusive inquiry and associated negative publicity
caused irreversible damage to his McCarthy’s reputation. For many, the hearings showed
a man who was a reckless and dishonest bully, while daily newspaper accounts were
frequently unfavorable.51

In January 1954, before his appearances on See It Now and the Senate hearings, a
national Gallup Poll showed McCarthy with a net favorable national rating of plus
twenty-one. In May, less than five months later, it had declined to negative fourteen, a
thirty-five point plunge.52 The formal censure on December 2, 1954 by his Senate
colleagues was the final blow to McCarthy’s political career. For his conduct during the
hearings, they declared that Joseph McCarthy had "acted contrary to senatorial ethics and

50 The hearing investigated conflicting reports produced by McCarthy and the United States Army.
McCarthy cited information to the public that conflicted with official Army documents. The hearings
undermined public trust of McCarthy.
51 Ted Morgan, Reds: McCarthyism in Twentieth-Century America (New York: Random House,
2004), 489.
52 Nelson W. Polsby, "Towards an Explanation of McCarthyism". Political Studies, 8 (October 1962): 252.
tended to bring the Senate into dishonor and disrepute, obstructing the constitutional processes of the Senate, and impairing its dignity.”

Leading up to the November elections, Proxmire escalated his attacks on McCarthy, calling him “a disgrace to Wisconsin, to the Senate, and to America.” Proxmire’s position from several years earlier was finally popular. Past midnight on election night it appeared that public opinion had also turned in favor of Proxmire himself. The Associated Press projected him to be Wisconsin’s next governor. A few hours later, when the final counts were tallied, Proxmire lost the election by less than one percentage point. With little to no rest, the consummate campaigner was once again at the entrance of manufacturing plants in Milwaukee shaking hands, thanking workers for their support the morning after losing the election.

The Personal Costs of a Political Life

Six weeks after election night, Elsie Rockefeller Proxmire left their farmhouse with their two children and relocated to Nevada in order to proceed with a divorce. A family friend recounted how Elsie Rockefeller had been lonely, that “She wanted affection. But Bill couldn’t give it—he was such a single-minded character.” During campaigning Proxmire was seldom home more than a night or two each week, coming home late and leaving early. In Nevada, an uncontested divorce was granted in February 1955. Elsie was given full custody of their children and Proxmire granted visitation rights. Proxmire continued to live in their home and Elsie Rockefeller moved ten blocks.

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54 Sykes, Proxmire, 71.
55 Ibid., 71.
56 Ibid., 75.
away. Before the year was over, she had married Proxmire’s previous supervisor, The Capital Times longtime editor, Miles McMillin.  

Proxmire crusaded full-time for the governor’s seat in 1956, and for the first time The Capital Times endorsed his bid for elected office. His public profile had increased as the paper had published several of his articles attacking governmental corruption before supporting his candidacy. In addition, he had learned maximum efficiency from his previous two statewide elections. He campaigned with more resolve and discipline than ever before. A publicity machine, Proxmire worked around nineteen hours per day, and continued to eat homemade peanut butter sandwiches. With a typewriter mounted in the back seat, he utilized volunteer drivers for travel so that he could write correspondence and news releases while on the road. According to Proxmire, campaigning was energizing. He took efficiency to new levels and actively sought to shake more hands each day.

Despite losing two gubernatorial races in a row, Proxmire out-shined all other Democratic challengers and was unopposed in the 1956 primary. With a slight lead in the polls just weeks before the election, international affairs took over the media spotlight. Israel invaded Gaza, Great Britain and France made air strikes against Egypt, and Russian forces crushed the Hungarian revolution. With a surge of support for Republican candidates, President Eisenhower enjoyed a landslide victory in the 1956 election. With more votes than any other Democrat running for statewide office, Proxmire still lost the general election by 59,000 votes, which was more than the 34,000 votes cast for

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57 Ibid., 75. 
58 Ibid., 77. By his own account he shook 4,800 hands in a single day. 
59 Ibid., 78. 
60 Ibid., 83.
votes of his one percent loss two years earlier. Again, with only a few hours of sleep, Proxmire was at the factory gates of manufacturing plants the morning after the election. Looking toward the next election, he again thanked workers for their support.\footnote{Ibid., 84.}

It was during his 1956 campaign that Proxmire and Ellen Hodges Sawall, the executive secretary of the Democratic Party in Wisconsin, carried out a brief courtship. They had known each other since Proxmire began running for statewide office in 1952 and after spending time together at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, decided to get married. From all accounts it was more of a practical decision made by two recently divorced individuals who shared an interest in politics, rather than a romance. They scheduled their wedding for after the election in order to avoid bringing attention to Proxmire’s recent divorce. In a small family event, the couple married on December 1, 1956. Uncharacteristically, Proxmire settled into family life for several months and focused on his business investments. The income was necessary to the family as it represented its sole form of financial support.\footnote{Proxmire, One Foot in Washington, 2.}

**Running for Senate**

On May 2, 1957 at the Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland, Senator Joseph R. McCarthy died at the age of forty-seven. A month later the governor called a special election, and despite efforts by Wisconsin’s Democratic party leaders to dissuade Proxmire from running, he officially joined the race the following day.\footnote{Sykes, Proxmire, 88.} Because he had lost three elections in a row, many thought that he was not an electable candidate. Only sixteen percent of the voters turned out for the special election’s primary on July 30.
Proxmire easily won, but in the general election faced the man who had defeated him in 1952 and 1954, former Governor Kohler. As always, Proxmire’s campaign was bare bones. It depended upon his wife to manage the campaign, donations from family members to cover travel and printing expenses, and volunteers to drive.\(^{64}\) By 10:00 p.m. on August 27, the night of the election, it was clear that William Proxmire was the Senator elect from Wisconsin. After losing the race for the governor in 1952, 1954, and 1956, Proxmire once again got up early the morning after the election and thanked factory workers for their vote.\(^{65}\)

Proxmire’s election to the United States Senate was timely and the Democratic majority in the Senate welcomed him warmly to Washington. At the time of Proxmire’s election, the first civil rights bill in eighty years was under consideration by the Senate. Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson flew Proxmire out of Madison the night following the election and he was sworn in the following day. Proxmire contributed to the bill’s sixty-to-fifteen vote passage. In the following days, three senators stepped aside and Proxmire was appointed to the Banking and Currency, Post Office and Civil Service, and Small Business Committees of the Senate. The conductor of the Senate, Johnson, also announced that Proxmire would be one of four Senators to visit West Germany in November.\(^{66}\) The first Democratic senator from Wisconsin in twenty-five years, Proxmire was welcomed to Washington as a victor.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., 90.
\(^{65}\) Proxmire, One Foot in Washington, 9.
\(^{66}\) Sykes, Proxmire, 94.
The Freshman Senator from Wisconsin

Proxmire had campaigned as the underdog four times in the previous five years and was unaccustomed to acting in a reserved fashion. Yet, the avid and verbose debater played the dutiful and obedient legislator during most of his first year in office. A long tradition dictated the acceptable behavior of freshman senators, which included not speaking on the Senate floor unless called upon by a senior member. In June 1958, with the debate of a bill that impacted Wisconsin, Proxmire’s patience had run thin. After ten obsequious months, Proxmire finally ignored Senate protocol. Just a few days before the summer recess, a bill was presented which served Illinois at the expense of Wisconsin and other states along the upper Mississippi. The bill sought to approve increased water diversion from Lake Michigan to Illinois in order to wash out sewage and pollution produced by Chicago. Wisconsin had a financial and ecological interest in the water and Proxmire decided to do everything in his power to serve his constituents. He first delayed the bill until the last day of the session and then held the floor for the final three hours, preventing a vote before the scheduled recess. Senate leadership could have extended the session through the weekend, but Proxmire had stayed up Friday night conducting further research. His colleagues knew that he was prepared to hold the floor all day Saturday and perhaps through Sunday. Proxmire’s endurance as a one-man filibusterer would not be tested for several more years.

A tireless researcher and prolific speaker, the freshman senator from Wisconsin was prepared to hold the floor through the weekend. Proxmire’s stand earned him the

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67 Ibid., 96.
enmity of many of the senate’s leaders, but he was an independent legislator whose contribution to Senatorial debates thereafter was voluminous. In the later part of 1958 he introduced a wide variety of bills intended to plug tax loopholes and cut government waste. Proxmire’s proposals, arguments, and presence on the Senate floor enraged majority leader Johnson, who was infuriated by Proxmire’s refusal to work within the Senate hierarchy.69

Re-Election in 1958

Amid his first principled stand as a senator, Proxmire campaigned ceaselessly for re-election. His win in August 1957 only guaranteed him his seat through the November elections the following year. Primarily at his own expense, he traveled most weekends between Washington, D.C. and Wisconsin. In total, the new senator spent parts of 156 days in Wisconsin while not missing a single role-call vote on the Senate floor in 1958. In the midst of his campaigning, Ellen Proxmire gave birth on 3 July to their first child, who died the following day. She later commented, “there was little time for sorrow and disappointment.” They would not have another child until the fall of 1961.70 The death of their child and how Proxmire handled it was clear evidence that the emotional needs of a family were not a high priority for a campaigning politician.

Easily winning the Democratic primary, Proxmire faced a former Wisconsin Supreme Court judge in the general election. The election proved rancorous and included participation by both Democrat and Republican party leaders, such as then Vice President Richard Nixon and future vice president and presidential candidate Hubert Humphrey.

69 Sykes, Proxmire, 101.
70 Proxmire, One Foot in Washington, 17.
Proxmire’s re-election campaign ended on an especially sour note when anti-Catholic literature circulated in Milwaukee denouncing his opponent. Although Proxmire was known for strongly worded criticisms, throughout his career he refrained from personal attacks, focusing his wit on his opponents’ positions and policies. Although the material was clearly not authorized by the Proxmire campaign, his Republican challenger attacked him as a religious bigot.\footnote{Sykes, Proxmire, 102.}

**The Security of a Six-Year Term: “Quixote from Wisconsin”**

The 1958 mid-term elections provided windfall gains for Democrats across the nation. Their numbers in the Senate increased from forty-nine to sixty-two and their majority rose from thirty-five to one hundred and thirty in the House of Representatives. The November victory guaranteed Proxmire a full six-year term in Congress and provided him with the confidence to engage controversial issues, which included the legislative process. Proxmire and others had long noted that control of the Senate was usurped by a few of its Democratic leaders.\footnote{Ibid., 107.}

As the Chairman of the Democratic Conference, Chairman of the Democratic Policy Committee, and the Majority Leader, Senator Johnson was the unofficial king of the Senate and no one questioned his singular control over the legislative process. He decided committee assignments, the allocation of office space, the distribution of campaign funds, and rounded up votes when necessary to pass legislation. Johnson’s total control of the Senate Democratic party caucus in January 1959 proved too much for Proxmire to accept without comment. Since watching Senate debates while stationed
outside Washington, D.C. during World War II, Proxmire believed that the floor of the Senate was where the nation’s pressing issues should be debated. In late February, taking the Senate floor, Proxmire criticized Johnson’s control of the Democratic caucus, in an apparently quixotic quest, challenging Johnson by asking why establishing the party’s agenda was not a collective task. To many observers and Washington insiders, challenging Johnson was akin to political suicide.\textsuperscript{73}

Proxmire, an enigma to Johnson, was driven by principle and was little influenced by the opinions of his fellow senators. Johnson privately lectured Proxmire for his speech, but Proxmire claimed that mail and telegrams supported him against Johnson thirty-to-one.\textsuperscript{74} Proxmire believed that public opinion was overwhelmingly in his favor and that the public was ready for the Democrats publicly to reaffirm and deliver on their campaign pledges. A few weeks later he attacked Johnson’s autocratic and secretive Senate and then in mid-April he called on Johnson personally to deliver on the Democratic campaign pledges of 1956 that included aid to education, revisions to the tax code, extension of the minimum wage, housing and urban renewal, civil rights legislation, and assistance to farmers.\textsuperscript{75} For the first and only time, Johnson responded on the Senate floor, stating, “This one-man rule stuff is a myth.... I do not know how one can force a Senator to do anything.”\textsuperscript{76}

Not easily cowed by men in positions of power, Proxmire vociferously opposed three executive branch appointments of individuals with very close ties to oil, either as company employees or asset managers, or because of personally holding oil company

\textsuperscript{73} Ritchie. “Interview with Howard E. Shuman,” 211.
\textsuperscript{74} Sykes, \textit{Proxmire}, 117.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 119.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 120.
stock. Again, he carried out a one-man filibuster, maintaining the Senate floor for nineteen hours.\textsuperscript{77} Allowing interruptions to conduct business by other senators, in August 1961 he talked through the night and until lunch the next day. His audience comprised four other senators who nodded-off throughout the night as Proxmire provided an endless stream of arguments, only pausing for a sip of liquid or a brief trip to the bathroom. Calling attention to his eccentric nature, \textit{Time} Magazine dubbed him “Quixote from Wisconsin.”\textsuperscript{78}

Proxmire also criticized John F. Kennedy’s financial policies and further undermined a program of mandatory feed grain controls in 1962. Designed to reduce surplus food by providing additional farm subsidies, the bill was ushered through the legislative process by Kennedy’s agriculture secretary. Proxmire sidestepped the Kennedy administration by introducing his own bill and getting it approved by the Agriculture Committee. It extended the current programs for another year, thereby making Kennedy’s legislation unnecessary. Proxmire was a headache for the Kennedy Administration.\textsuperscript{79}

Proxmire seldom participated in the Washington, D.C. social scene.\textsuperscript{80} As during his undergraduate years at Yale, the process of rubbing elbows and building friendships

\begin{footnotes}
\item[77] According to \textit{Time} Magazine, the record at that time was twenty-three hours and held by South Carolina’s Strom Thurmond for his filibustering against the 1957 Civil Rights bill.
\item[78] “Quixote from Wisconsin,” \textit{Time}.
\item[80] Proxmire, \textit{One Foot in Washington}, 46. Ellen Proxmire claims that it was a mutual decision, writing, “It’s not that we don’t like people; we just find that people by the hundreds, all talking at once and milling around, are not our cup of tea. Each day a Senator must see people in large numbers. For us this resulted in the inevitable decision that social life should be relaxing and modest.”
\end{footnotes}
at after-hour events eluded him. Proxmire was a working machine, programmed for maximum efficiency whether campaigning, legislating, or exercising. He honed his life for productivity: from quick handshake techniques, typing on the road, to his morning run-to-work and simple office breakfasts. In order to increase his legislative efficiency, he also learned how to speed read so that he could make his way through volumes of information. According to Proxmire, running to work saved time waiting for the bus, saved money by not taking a cab, and provided an early morning workout.\(^{81}\)

According to Ellen Proxmire and biographer Sykes, the Proxmires did not miss participating in the Washington, D.C. social scene. At the few events they attended, Proxmire excused himself no later than 11:00 p.m., stating that he needed to be up at 6:00 a.m. for his workout routine. Despite their political conflicts, the Kennedys continued to invite the Proxmires to prestigious social events, most likely the result of Ellen Proxmire’s networking and volunteer work on the president’s inauguration.\(^{82}\) However, the workaholic senator from Wisconsin never attended out of obligation, and only if the occasion fit into his work schedule.\(^{83}\) Raising three children, hosting diners at their house for important figures, and participation in the Washington, D.C. social scene (however limited) proved to much for Ellen Proxmire. Her account of her life in Washington, D.C. *One Foot in Washington* (1963) tells many stories in which she felt overworked and of several situations in which her husband was not present for their children.\(^{84}\)

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\(^{81}\) Sykes, *Proxmire*, 144-145. Proxmire, *One Foot in Washington*, 4. Also see page 9, for an account of handshaking on average approximately 2,595 hands per day while campaigning.

\(^{82}\) Proxmire, *One Foot in Washington*, 83-96. Chapter Seven, “Capital Punishment,” chronicles her role in chairing one of the Inaugural Balls.

\(^{83}\) Sykes, *Proxmire*, 127.

\(^{84}\) Proxmire, *One Foot in Washington*, 36, 43, 93.
Can Small Business Survive?

Appointed to the Small Business Committee his first few days in office, Proxmire became an expert on the issues facing small businesses, so much so that he published *Can Small Business Survive?* in 1964. It was his first of seven books. Four additional books focused on issues of government accountability and fiscal responsibility during the 1970s and the remaining two books covered personal health. The Senator shared his formula for exercise and diet with *You Can Do It!: Senator Proxmire’s Exercise, Diet and Relaxation Plan* in 1973 and *Your Joy Ride to Health* in 1994.

*Can Small Business Survive?* was the product of years of legislative research, personal correspondences with small business owners, and membership on the Senate Small Business Committee. A self-help guide for small business owners, it provides a detailed list of common problems and explanations as to how to address them. It also criticizes big business and the regulatory role of the federal government, but argues that the roles of large and small businesses are complimentary and should not be viewed as adversarial. The book explains the ongoing process by which business was being concentrated into the hands of fewer and fewer. The real danger, according to Proxmire, was not the loss of small businesses, as he believed that they would always have a significant role in the economy, but the political influence and increasing control of the legislative process wielded by large corporations.

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88 Ibid., 9.
Proxmire’s book details the troubles and frustrations facing small business. Besides the lack of financing available, small businesses are usually excluded from new commercial spaces in favor of national chains due to financial requirements that are nearly impossible for a small business owner to fulfill. Proxmire bemoans the loss of agency that many small business owners face as they strive to meet requirements established by financial and manufacturing giants. Although big businesses typically support smaller businesses with large amounts of contract work, the small business or manufacturers increasingly become “nothing more than an appendage of the prime contractor with all managerial functions assumed by the latter on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.” The large firm dictates the what, how, and when of the small business. It is because of the need for these large contracts that the choice for smaller businesses, according to Proxmire, is total compliance or closing shop.

Drawing from legislative experience, Proxmire’s book also devotes full chapters to the issues of anti-monopoly laws, quality stabilization proposals, the world marketplace, exportation of products, acquiring government contracts, and the nation’s complicated tax laws. The small business is at a great disadvantage in all of the above concerns, and Proxmire’s experience and research detail the ways in which the nation’s antitrust laws affect small businesses. According to Proxmire, in the world of big business the small guy has very little chance of ever winning a private damage suit. The process is lengthy, expensive, and with the vast majority of government initiated cases

89 Ibid., 143.
90 Ibid., 145.
settled out of court, the process of compiling evidence must begin anew with each private suit.\footnote{Ibid., 145.}

Despite these liberal calls for the expansion of government through enforcement of existing regulations, Proxmire’s voting record during his first full-term in Washington reflected his core values: financial economy and efficiency. Between 1959 and 1965, Proxmire consistently voted to limit the spending of the United States government. He believed that the government should not spend more than it received in revenue in a healthy economy. He voted repeatedly against popular expenditures, such as public health service appropriations, the NASA budget (under Kennedy’s request to travel to the moon), and funds for a supersonic transport plane intended for military use.\footnote{Ibid., 128.} In September 1962, Proxmire held the Senate floor for nine hours straight arguing that a $60 million dam in Kansas was entirely unnecessary. According to Proxmire’s well researched arguments, the dam was located too far up stream to provide the purported flood protection and was designed to increase the amount of arable land at a time when the Department of Agriculture was paying farmers not to grow crops in order to reduce farm surpluses.\footnote{Ibid., 128.} Proxmire earned the enmity of many of his colleagues as he consistently voted against appropriations that were designed to funnel money back into their home states.\footnote{Ibid., 129.} Despite his unwillingness to play politics with other members of the Senate, he slowly moved up the hierarchy in his first term. Appointed to the prestigious Joint
Economic Committee and the powerful Appropriations Committee, Proxmire may not have been popular, but he was respected.95

Political pundits had a hard time reconciling Proxmire’s seemingly contradictory positions: a socially liberal Democrat who supported human rights and organized labor but usually voted with the fiscal conservatives. Commenting upon his record through the mid-1960s, Proxmire said, “I learned that the government is becoming so enormously big that it is getting out of control.... Waste is just as sure as the sunrise. The only way to cut down on this waste is to pound away as hard as you can, challenge the usefulness of all programs, insist on justification for every item.”96 Besides his principled quest against government improvidence, Proxmire refrained from making deals and rarely participated in private strategy sessions with fellow senators. Proxmire held his own counsel and decided his own political agenda, just as he did throughout the many gubernatorial campaigns.97 He stated in a 1963 interview, “I don’t follow the President, and I don’t follow any groups within or without the Democratic party.”98

Many labeled Proxmire a publicity hound. While he prided himself on how many hands he had shaken (by 1971 he would claim he had shaken over two million hands in Wisconsin, statistically equivalent to every voter in the state), many mocked him for his propensity to “press the flesh.”99 Whether it was his taking the floor at the Democratic

96 Proxmire, as quoted in Sykes, Proxmire, 132.
97 Ibid., 134.
98 Ibid., 133.
99 Ibid., 128.
National Convention early in his career or making a lone filibuster in his first year in the Senate, Proxmire’s desire for publicity rubbed some the wrong way.\footnote{Ibid., 139.}

**Proxmire’s First Scandal**

Even the principled and efficient Proxmire could not escape scandal. In 1963, he hired Frank Campenni, a thirty-two year old English lecturer and magazine editor, to be his Washington office administrative assistant. Campenni seemed a perfect fit for the Wisconsin electorate and for Proxmire’s demanding standards. He had political experience as a press aide and legislative researcher to Milwaukee’s mayor and the strong research abilities of a graduate student near completion of a Ph.D. in English literature at the University of Wisconsin. Hired in August 1962, Campenni’s only apparent drawback was that he would have to work remotely until he finished his degree at the university.

After seven months of employment, the *Wisconsin State Journal* ran a damaging piece in March 1963, triggering a storm of negative public opinion throughout Wisconsin.\footnote{Ibid., 148.}

Proxmire was suddenly depicted as duping the public by paying a student to finish his degree while Campenni was charged with accepting a student loan while working full-time for the senator.\footnote{Samuel C. Reynolds, “Officials Unaware of Full-Time Post” *The Capital Times* [Madison], April 10, 1963, 1.}

Proxmire was very pleased with Campenni’s work from August through March and had no intention of changing the relationship. Proxmire sought to weather the political fallout and did his best to eliminate all doubts that the arrangement had been duplicitous. Proxmire first provided justification for the long-distance working
relationship, including a detailed work schedule and the copies of Campenni’s assignments. When this failed to satisfy public opinion, he then wrote a check to the federal government for over $9,000 as repayment for Campenni’s salary and another $3,000 directly to Campenni in order to cover his salary until he relocated to Washington. The barrage of criticisms against Proxmire for wasteful and unethical spending did not relax despite Proxmire’s expensive gestures. It was apparent that the issue was not going to blow over. With Proxmire’s blessing, Campenni resigned.\textsuperscript{103}

For the frugal and principled Proxmire, this moral and financial blow proved excruciating. His biographer noted nearly a decade later how revisiting the event continued visibly to pain the senator. Proxmire apologized in public, but in private held that he and Wisconsin’s constituents had been well served by Campenni. Proxmire regretted losing his “talented” and “hard working” assistant—strong compliments from a notorious workaholic. Proxmire was also sensitive to the controversy due to the large dent it put in his personal finances. He had worked tirelessly to remain above any charges of political corruption.\textsuperscript{104} Other sources affirmed that the front page scandal that erupted from Campenni’s full-time remote work arrangement was limited in scope. The state Democratic Chairman, Pat Lucey, told the \textit{Wisconsin State Journal} that Proxmire’s only fault was his failure to foresee the negative publicity that such a work arrangement would produce.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{103} Sykes, 151.
\textsuperscript{104} Ellen Proxmire, 41.
\textsuperscript{105} “Lucey Hails Proxmire’s refunding,” \textit{The Wisconsin State Journal}, April 26, 1963, Sec. 1, 5.
Proxmire had earned the reputation as one who would not accept any political perks, not even a cigar, martini, or a pack of chewing gum.\textsuperscript{106} Despite taking significant sums from organized labor, he abhorred lobbying and the political perks that politicians either accepted from private business or lavished upon themselves with public funds. Financially, Proxmire and his family could not afford the $12,000 for the Campenni fiasco. He was spending more money each year on legitimate business expenses, including travel, stationery, and campaign ads, than he earned even with the comfortable salary of a senator. Additionally, early in his Senate career he sold lucrative stock and bond investments that posed a potential conflict of interest. These liquidations included an interest in a Wisconsin-based printing company following his appointments to the Senate Post Office and Civil Services Committee, for the company’s business relied heavily on mail contracts. Additionally, when his father died in 1959, he allowed his sister to receive all of the family’s dividend-paying banking stocks and in 1963 he converted all of his private stocks to government bonds, bills, and notes as a sign of support for pending legislation that would require all members of Congress to disclose their personal investment positions.\textsuperscript{107} Eliminating all investments with potential conflicts of interest had hurt the Proxmire family income. Proxmire estimated that from 1963 on, the divestments were costing him about $6,000 per year in lost income.\textsuperscript{108}

Due to his scrupulous ethics and the cost of private education for his five children, Proxmire’s net worth—approximately $200,000 in 1963—dropped to around $160,000 in

\textsuperscript{106} Sykes, \textit{Proxmire}, 154.  
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 154.  
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 154.
1970.\textsuperscript{109} Smaller financial setbacks also contributed to his slow loss of wealth. A Youth Opportunity campaign began in 1965 under the behest of President Johnson in which federal agencies offered summer jobs to minors. Proxmire’s son Ted and Ellen’s daughter were two of the employed youths. Although Proxmire did not recommend his own children, a large number of the positions were the result of Congressional patronage. Following this revelation, in order to remove the slightest hint of nepotism, Proxmire wrote a check to the federal government for nearly $2,000, reimbursing all expenses and salaries received by his son and stepdaughter.\textsuperscript{110}

**Increased Influence in the Senate**

Considered an eccentric and an outsider to most of the Senate, Proxmire was slowly gaining the ability to influence legislation. The press may have interpreted his principled stands as foolishly attacking windmills, but with time not all of his crusades would be in vain. A 1964 Supreme Court ruling mandated that state legislatures must be apportioned according to population. There were gross examples in which the drawing of districts favored those in power and repressed minority representation in the state legislatures. For example, in California, one senator represented 14,000 constituents while another represented six million. In Florida fourteen percent of voters could control the state senate.\textsuperscript{111} If enforced, the ruling would make the nation a more representative democracy.

In 1964, Proxmire began a five-year campaign to uphold the “one man—one vote” rule. Ideally, the court ruling would have supported equal representation and in the

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 156.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 156.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 169.
long-term facilitated the civil rights of disenfranchised minorities. Many criticized the court for its involvement in state elections and called on Congress to amend the constitution and thus overrule the Supreme Court. Everett McKinley Dirksen, the Senate Republican Leader, proposed a rider to the foreign aid bill that would delay the enforcement of the Supreme Court’s ruling. Proxmire spearheaded a small group in Congress that carried out a series of timely filibusters and committee delays in the 1964, 1965, and 1966 legislative sessions in order to prevent the Senate from approving a Congressional amendment. With only a handful of supporters, and lacking concentrated power within the Senate, the small coalition managed to stop the Dirksen amendment several years in a row.\textsuperscript{112}

Following his re-election in 1964, which he won by a slimmer margin than in 1958, Proxmire’s public attacks on spending were fewer and he was supportive of Johnson’s management of the Vietnam War. On the whole, Proxmire still opposed the Johnson Administration and his party’s leadership much more often than the vast majority of Democrats.\textsuperscript{113} He continued to fight against what he saw as wasteful spending and had several legislative successes during his second full term such as his amendment to the 1968 Housing Act which restructured the bill. The Proxmire amendment removed many roadblocks to housing opportunities for the poor.\textsuperscript{114} He continued to attack weak lobbying laws because they lacked enforcement mechanisms and proposed environmental


\textsuperscript{113} Sykes, \textit{Proxmire}, 163.

protections by targeting polluters with special taxes. Many industries poured their toxic waste into public waterways, and Proxmire saw taxing as an efficient way to reduce waste.\footnote{Sykes, Proxmire, 164.}

Proxmire had moved up the ladder in the Senate, largely through attrition in the 1966 and 1968 elections, becoming chair of the Joint Economic Committee and its Federal Procurement Subcommittee, earning a place on the Senate’s Democratic Steering Committee, and maintaining his seat on the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee. All positions offered power within the Senate and the potential for publicity.\footnote{Ibid., 166.}

Proxmire also became more effective during his second full term as he learned how to manage his office staff. Due to pay increases, he hired better staff and finally began delegating tasks, trusting his staff to help him legislate. According to biographer Sykes, by the late 1960s, Proxmire had assembled a “scholarly, versatile staff that was generally considered one of the best in the Senate.”\footnote{Ibid., 167. His staff included men with advanced degrees from Brown, New York University and Harvard, and with significant work experience ranging from that of law professor and book editor to staff experience with other senators. A leading example of an outstanding staff member was Howard E. Shuman, who joined Proxmire in 1969. Shuman was the former administrative assistant to Senator Paul Douglas, a longtime Proxmire ally, who lost re-election in 1966 after serving eighteen years in the Senate. Significant pay increases allowed all Senators to draw greater talent, as the pay schedule for Senate aides between 1960 and 1970 nearly doubled.}

Four years into his second term, Proxmire won an important legislative success. In May 1968, President Johnson signed the first “truth in lending” law requiring lenders to disclose annual interest rates to consumers, thus preventing the common practice of hiding interest rates within complex rate schedules. Since 1959, Senator Paul Douglass had worked on the bill and, following his departure from Congress in 1966, Proxmire
became the leading Democrat on the Banking and Currency Committee and inherited the responsibility of bringing the bill to fruition.\textsuperscript{118} In his crusade for better consumer protection laws, Proxmire investigated how inaccurate information harmed the lives of consumers. From his Financial Institutions Subcommittee, Proxmire publically attacked the credit reporting agencies for the high frequency of errors in their system. Years of diligent effort led to the Fair Credit Reporting Act of 1971, which gave consumers the right to access their credit files at the national bureaus and to have any errors fixed.\textsuperscript{119}

The Vietnam War: Report From Wasteland

Proxmire’s shifting support for the Vietnam War was a rare example of a change in his political views. Initially, he provided unqualified support for the war but by his third full term in the Senate he had repudiated his earlier judgment. In the parlance of the time, early in his congressional career, Proxmire was a “hawk,” a member of a small cadre of Senators who believed that in the fight against communism there was no substitute for victory. In 1963, he aggressively asserted, “If we lose, we die. Victory is everything.”\textsuperscript{120} By the end of 1966, after the commitment of a large number of American troops, Proxmire’s position wavered, but he refrained from criticizing the president until early the following year when it became known that the war in Vietnam’s ten billion dollar estimate for fiscal year 1967 had doubled and would cost taxpayers twenty billion dollars. In principle Proxmire was not against war, but he was against expensive wars.\textsuperscript{121}

Proxmire considered human rights to be a fundamental aspect of international security and made the first of many public gestures beginning in January 1967. He

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 179.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 180.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 184.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 186.
opened the legislative session by calling for ratification of the international treaty against genocide. President Harry S. Truman had first asked the United States to ratify the international treaty against genocide in 1949, nearly twenty years earlier.\textsuperscript{122} Between 1967 and 1988, Proxmire delivered more than 3,000 speeches on the Senate floor calling for the treaty to be ratified. He believed that the nation should know that it was not fulfilling its promises to its citizens or to the world if it was unwilling to take a stand against genocide.\textsuperscript{123}

By the spring of 1968, following the massive Tet Offensive by the North Vietnamese and the National Liberations Front, many questioned Johnson’s position that victory was imminent and others challenged his proposed escalation of the war. On the Senate floor in June 1968, Proxmire voiced his first outright critique of the war and introduced an amendment removing the Defense Department’s $268 million appropriation for the buildup of B-52 bomber operations. According to Proxmire, increased bombing was “threatening to devastate that country and completely alienate its citizens from the American cause.” He called the tonnage of bombs dropped up to that point in the war, “the mathematical... the military... the moral equivalent of nuclear war.” Proxmire’s floor amendment to stop the escalation of bombing in Vietnam lost in a vote of 79 to 12. Proxmire openly acknowledged that his position had changed drastically. He no longer believed the conflict supported America’s global interests or mission.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{124} Sykes, \textit{Proxmire}, 187
Between 1968 and 1969 Proxmire’s Subcommittee on Economy in Government held a series of high profile hearings that profiled rampant military waste and generated national attention. The revelations were published in 1970 under the title *Report from Wasteland: America’s Military-Industrial Complex*. Ghost written, the text documented rampant waste by the Pentagon uncovered by Proxmire and his staff. Proxmire dedicated the work to A.E. Fitzgerald and John McGee, both of whom were fired from their positions after testifying in Proxmire’s Senate Subcommittee hearings.

Fitzgerald and McGee were financial experts and reviewers, whose duty it was to save the government money. Fitzgerald was a high-level civilian cost analyst in the office of the secretary of the Air Force and who, as an efficiency expert, was charged with reviewing Lockheed Aircraft’s C-5A factory. With his superiors’ approval, Fitzgerald made multiple suggestions that had the potential to save the nation billions of dollars, but he was fired. McGee had a similar experience, prompting Proxmire to conclude that “If you do your duty, uncover waste and corruption, and perform a public service, the military bureaucracy will attack you instead of the waste or corruption.... What happened to these two men demonstrates how the system under which the military-industrial complex operates promotes waste and penalizes efficiency.”

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126 On November 13, 1968, under questioning by Proxmire at a Senate committee hearing, Fitzgerald acknowledged that according to an Air Force budget review, there had been a $2 billion overrun on its C5-A cargo plane. Unfortunately, his public statements were not interpreted by Air Force leadership as an opportunity for fiscal responsibility. Despite being granted tenure and fulfilling the duties of his job description, a year after his initial testimony he was fired. An incriminating Air Force letter surfaced that outlined three ways that “could result in Mr. Fitzgerald’s departure.” The second method outlined in the letter, a reduction in manpower, was used to fire Fitzgerald. It was clear that he was being punished for truthful testimony before Proxmire’s Subcommittee on Economy in Government. John McGee, a Navy
Report From Wasteland chronicled Proxmire’s investigations and public hearings that revealed prolific waste within the Pentagon. It also outlined the insidious relationships between elected officials, military contractors, intelligence agencies, educational institutions, and branches of the military. These corrupt associations created a system of extravagant waste according to Proxmire. To question the Pentagon in the mid-1960s was—according to Cold War ideology—tantamount to undermining national security. Proxmire wisely reoriented the public debate by showing that efficiency would not harm national security, but was essential to ensuring it. Crafting this position, Proxmire cited a Congressional Quarterly article in which high profile sources at the Pentagon believed that $10.8 billion could be cut from the Pentagon’s $80 billion budget without impairing national defense.  

Proxmire was unequivocal in his condemnation of a system of greed that produced such extravagant waste. He colorfully described the military industrial complex as having "more tentacles than an octopus. Its dimensions are almost infinite. Its is a military—industrial—bureaucratic—trade-association—labor-union—intellectual—technical—academic—service—club—political complex whose pervasiveness touches

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veteran and a petroleum expert hired as a civilian fuel inspector by the military in 1966, had a parallel experience. Arriving at his new post in Thailand in 1967, he immediately witnessed gross discrepancies between receipts and deliveries, as millions of gallons of petroleum were unaccounted. He went through the normal procedures to address the issue and was sent to a post located far from the documents that he was hired to audit. He continued his investigation and filed a formal grievance but both were ignored. UNCertain what to do next, McGee wrote to Senator Proxmire who then asked the General Accounting Office (GAO) to investigate. The GAO investigation affirmed McGee’s claims and found that between January and October 1967 at least 5.5 million gallons of fuel were either stolen or unaccounted. McGee’s reward for exposing this waste was a reprimand and denial of a routine pay increase. Although with pressure from Proxmire the reprimand would be withdrawn and the increase approved, McGee was then demoted and relocated. See William Proxmire, Report From Wasteland: America’s Military-Industrial Complex (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 26.

Proxmire, Report From Wasteland, 4.
nearly every citizen.” His text overflows with information on the countless unethical associations that had perpetuated the wasteful system. Proxmire detailed how some two hundred military and civil service employees were responsible for communicating to the press, social organizations, congressmen, and the nation at large that the military complex was serving their interests, at the price of approximately fifty million dollars per year. This was an extravagant sum for an organization that did not sell any products. Proxmire insisted that by his calculations and the analysis conducted by high ranking military official the Pentagon’s annual budget—eighty billion—could easily be reduced by eight to ten billion dollars without affecting national security.

Proxmire chronicled how the cost overruns of the nation’s thirty-eight main weapons systems added up to at least twenty billion dollars, and how their budgets were at least fifty percent greater than originally estimated and approved by Congress. The system created an atmosphere in which outlandish cost overruns became the norm. Defense contractors provided low bids in order to win contracts and subsequently raised the prices while in production, justifying additional expenses by appealing to national security. If fiscal responsibility and national security were true priorities, why did Congress devote days to the debate of a two to three billion dollar foreign aid budget and only minutes to discuss the eighty billion dollar defense budget? Expenditure requests by the Pentagon were largely unquestioned by the American Congress and were a real threat to America’s security. It was this inefficient system that “saps our economic

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128 Ibid., 9.
129 Ibid., 20, 21.
130 Ibid., See Chapter Eight.
131 Ibid., 53.
132 Ibid., 91.
resources.” Proxmire declared, “It promotes inflation. It misuses our skilled manpower. It wastes the energies and genius of our engineers, scientists, and intellectuals, while technical and academic research is misdirected.” Proxmire demanded that the funds, resources, and energies of the Pentagon be managed to better serve America’s international and domestic interests.

Report From Wasteland was published when the tide of support for the Vietnam War had turned. Many Americans were looking for reasons to criticize the military. Proxmire’s committee hearings and their re-counting in Report From Wasteland were popularly received in part because he framed the issue of curbing government waste as necessary to increasing national security. In a speech before the book’s publication, he stated, “Luxury military budgets weaken this country.” Proxmire’s aggressive stance toward the military industrial-complex asserted that proper control over the Pentagon’s budget was an important aspect of national security.134

The reviews of the text from around the globe were overwhelmingly positive. Reviews of the book came from a wide variety of sources within academia, the military, and public sectors.135 A professor from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology explained that, "As part of the cold war psychology, we have been working on the basis that we could not afford to be without a ’required’ military system.” The nation was so concerned with falling behind the Soviet Union that nearly all military requests were approved with little hesitation.136

133 Ibid., 3.
135 For an international review see: L. P. Markov. International Affairs, Moscow, Soviet Union, 103-105.
Proxmire’s Subcommittee on Economy in Government hearings and subsequent text created significant publicity, making the Defense Department aware that it needed to be more financially responsible. The book and public hearings also established Proxmire as a national figure and contributed to his growing reputation as an economic expert.

Although Proxmire was unable to gain support for a Congressional elimination in the C-5A appropriations, his hearings produced significant reductions in the number of C-5A aircraft ordered by the Defense Department for 1970. Despite this success, and bringing attention to the broader failures, Proxmire lamented that the eighty-one planes in operation still cost more than the original estimate for one hundred and twenty planes.\(^{137}\)

Proxmire continued to criticize the financial costs of the war and the moral implications of America’s actions abroad. He was very upset with Nixon’s 1970 expansion of the war into Cambodia. After six years of fighting and billions of dollars spent, Proxmire allied himself with the handful of senators who opposed the war from the beginning. In a 1971 interview, Proxmire regretted not having opposed the war at the beginning and, reflecting upon the Pentagon Papers, he declared that history would show all policymakers, from presidents Eisenhower through Nixon, to be involved in “a most unfortunate deception.”\(^{138}\)

**Victories: A Landslide and the SST**

On November 3, 1970, with seventy-one percent of the popular vote, Proxmire won every county, a feat never before accomplished by a senatorial candidate in Wisconsin.\(^{139}\) With a landslide win, Proxmire carried on as if the next election were the

\(^{137}\) Sykes, *Proxmire*, 206.
\(^{138}\) Ibid., 189.
\(^{139}\) Ibid., 210.
following year, not six years later. He embarked upon a grueling ten-day campaign in the middle of winter, covering 2,000 miles of roads in central Wisconsin. His twelve-to-eighteen hour days were planned for maximum efficiency, every minute utilized, as he made his way from public appearances at clubs and labor organizations to radio interviews and handshaking in public spaces.\footnote{Ibid., 209-216.}

Throughout 1970, Proxmire also continued his ongoing battle against federal support of a Super Sonic Transport (SST) plane. Since 1961, he had been one of a few senators who voted against government funding for the private development of the SST. When Nixon announced continued support in 1969, total expenditures were well over $700 million and Proxmire had fought for the past five years to eliminate further spending. Several independent committees appointed by the president determined the project to be an economic waste and potentially dangerous to the environment. Such environmental concerns were increasingly issues of national importance as the overall health of the planet became a mainstream issue in the 1970s. April 20, 1970 was the first national celebration of Earth Day, encouraging environmental health and quality. But, Proxmire’s votes against the SST since 1961 were in vain, as patronage from a few powerful congressional leaders, along with the executive branch, appeared to ensure continued funding.\footnote{"The Environment: SST: Boon or Boom-Doggie?" Time Magazine, June 1, 1970. http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,944292,00.html?artId=944292?contType=article?chn=us [Accessed October 24, 2011].}

From his Subcommittee on Economy in Government hearings in 1968 and 1969, Proxmire and his staff learned the importance of public involvement in congressional debates. Under the guidance of staff aid Dick Wegman, Proxmire decided to take the
issue directly to the public with publicized subcommittee hearings that concentrated on the environmental impacts of SST. The president’s Chairman of the Council on Environment Quality, an authority on environmental issues, testified that regular use of supersonic planes posed a serious threat to weather patterns and to human life if it affected the ozone layer as predicted.\textsuperscript{142} Proxmire further argued that the government had no business paying ninety percent of the development costs for a plane designated solely for commercial use. A coalition of environmental groups circulated these pronouncements, thereby generating significant public concern. For Proxmire the issue was economic. He did not believe that the federal government should subsidize the airline industry.\textsuperscript{143}

The proponents of the SST included powerful senate leaders and labor organizations. However, Proxmire turned it into a national issue and no amount of behind-the-scenes manipulations could force senators to vote against a vocal public.\textsuperscript{144} In December, by a margin of eleven votes, the Senate eliminated funding for the SST. The battle continued into 1971 when, amidst a heated national debate and front page coverage by \textit{The New York Times} outlining the potential health and environmental impacts, the House of Representatives also voted against further funding.\textsuperscript{145} This unlikely success inspired \textit{Time Magazine} to dub Proxmire the title, “Giant Killer.”\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{142} Sykes, \textit{Proxmire}, 220.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 218.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 223.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 229.
A Man for the Times

On the day before Christmas 1970, six of the seven letters to the editor of The New York Times reflected issues central to the decade. Four reflected Proxmire’s own positions. Of the six pertinent letters, one addressed the long-term viability of communes as a permanent way of life, revealing changing family practices common to the era. A second was skeptical that any government—including Americans—could solve real problems such as food shortages and population growth. Skepticism about government was also a palpable concern in the four remaining letters. A lengthy piece engaged the purpose of American involvement in Vietnam and argued that communism was not a global monolithic force, that Vietnam was not controlled by China or Russia and thus the justification for American military involvement had evaporated. The author argued that the North and South Vietnamese should be allowed to decide their own fate. Another letter expressed concern over the legislative process, questioning whether it served the people or the interests of a privileged few. The author explained how control over the entire process is concentrated in the hands of a few older committee chairmen, two-thirds of whom were over sixty-five years of aged. One shocked woman attacked Nixon’s expanded bombing missions in North Vietnam, arguing that increased bombing was no way to support revolution as the Nixon White House had previously argued. Another man wrote to criticize federal funding of SST, stating that rail was a much better investment and actually necessary for the nation to function.147

The issues discussed in these four letters aligned with Proxmire’s own points-of-view. He no longer believed that the strategic value of Vietnam in the war against

communism justified the war or that expanding bombing would ever win over a population and spread freedom, as Nixon’s White House proposed. Proxmire also fought against the inner mechanisms of the Senate for years, as power was consolidated into the hands of a few. He struggled in vain early in his career to gain appointments to important committees and attacked Johnson’s control of the Senate. Proxmire’s 1972 book, *Uncle Sam—The Last of the Bigtime Spenders*, even included sections titled, “Rigged Congressional Rules,” “Closed Congressional Meetings,” “Other Congressional Failures,” and “Stop Secret Hearings.”148 Without mentioning Proxmire, the last letter questioned the wisdom of funding SST development and in so doing made a point that was quintessential to Proxmire’s view: American priorities are out of order. In criticizing bloated budgets, the letter made precisely the point that Proxmire had been making for years. It was not that supersonic transport was inherently a bad idea, or that space exploration was not a worthy endeavor, but that there were more pressing concerns that increasingly affected the daily lives of Americans in the 1970s. Proxmire believed there was a serious misallocation of resources, that too little was going to urban renewal, medical aid, education and to preserving the environment.149

Emboldened by a series of legislative victories and the prospect, albeit slim, of a presidential bid, Proxmire expanded his attacks on the Defense Department. With a Republican sponsor in the spring of 1971, Proxmire proposed removing $8.6 billion from the defense budget and argued that health care, housing, pollution control, and welfare were all more pressing concerns. Although the proposal was not adopted, his point was

that all programs, whether military or social, require exhaustive scrutiny for effectiveness and efficiency.\textsuperscript{150}

Proxmire publicly announced in late August 1971 that he was considering running for the presidency. With over $100,000 pledged towards his candidacy, \textit{The New York Times} stated he would be focusing his campaign on “the state of the economy and the need for reassessment of national priorities.”\textsuperscript{151} However, this bid for the nation’s highest office was short lived, as Proxmire announced in early November that he would not be running for president. He provided several reasons why a successful national campaign was not feasible, including a lack of financial resources and corporate support. Proxmire knew that having a nationally recognized name was not enough to run a presidential campaign. Proxmire also explained how in his efforts to economize the government he had earned the enmity of three powerful lobbies: aerospace, labor, and banking. Aerospace and labor openly attacked Proxmire in his campaign against SST funding, while the banking community came to oppose him due to his truth-in-lending legislation.\textsuperscript{152}

Proxmire’s campaign against unsolicited credit cards, consumer protections from credit bureaus, his hearings on military waste, publication of \textit{Report From Wasteland}, his opposition to SST funding, and his role in negotiating a $250 million bailout of Lockheed—made Proxmire a household name and established him as the taxpayers’ advocate and expert on economic issues. His public visibility soared as his number of annual

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., 234.
appearances in the *The New York Times* increased approximately four-fold between the mid-1960s and the early 1970s: from fewer than forty in 1965 and 1966 to more than two hundred in 1971 and 1972.\(^{153}\)

By the early 1970s, Proxmire was considered an expert on numerous fiscal issues. *The New York Times* quoted him repeatedly on a wide variety of topics, including Nixon’s fiscal projections for 1972,\(^ {154}\) Department of Defense budget related statements about America’s military preparedness,\(^ {155}\) multiple cost over-runs on Defense Department weapons systems due to contractor price inflation,\(^ {156}\) and in-depth coverage of consultation with nine economists in order to create solutions to unemployment and inflation.\(^ {157}\) The *Times* also printed a lengthy letter to the editor by Proxmire dissecting Nixon’s fiscal policies and arguing that rather than addressing the emerging financial issues, the administration was shifting its numbers and attempting in its public statements and reports to “define away the problem of unemployment.”\(^ {158}\)

*Uncle Sam: The Last of the Bigtime Spenders* *(1972)*

With the assistance of a capable staff, Proxmire’s fiscal conservatism and social liberalism became a well-defined ideology which he detailed in his 1972 book, *Uncle Sam: The Last of the Bigtime Spenders*. Over a decade of experience in the Senate

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informed Proxmire’s explanation of the structural faults producing a national budget that was out of control. Outlining the role of Congress as primary manager of the budget, Proxmire argued that the nation’s legislative body has two primary jobs to perform: to guide national priorities and to ensure that those goals are met with the utmost economic efficiency. Focusing on “priorities” and “economy” in government, Proxmire asserted:

The budget—our number-one priority instrument—not only fails to define the fundamental purpose of expenditures but gives no qualitative statement of the programs’ objective either. Who benefits? Who pays the costs? If $1 million is appropriated to help poor farmers, how much goes to poor farmers? Do the subsidized housing programs actually house lower-income families or do the funds go to builders, bankers, and financiers?\(^{159}\)

Knowing the cost of a program and clearly evaluating the benefits are necessary to making budgetary decisions and setting the nation’s priorities. According to Proxmire, Congress failed to carry out these two obvious tasks.\(^{160}\)

Like *Can Small Business Survive?*, *Uncle Sam* is an informative and practical text, a guide to the structural problems of the federal government. It provides a detailed analysis of the budget process and explains taxation structure, warns of looming inflation from an out-of-control budget, and details how raising taxes (the traditional method for curbing inflation and closing budget gaps) would contribute to unemployment.\(^{161}\) Proxmire’s goal was to create awareness of the systemic problems that resulted from poor management of the nation’s finances. He presented five major flaws. First, the “budget is too voluminous for any one man to understand.”\(^{162}\) Second, Congressional Committees often did not employ enough staff to investigate and properly understand the billion-

\(^{159}\) Proxmire, *Uncle Sam*, 30.

\(^{160}\) Ibid., 37.

\(^{161}\) Ibid., 38.

\(^{162}\) Ibid., 45.
dollar decisions they make.\textsuperscript{163} Third, when considering the budget, Congress seldom gave more than a perfunctory examination to budget items.\textsuperscript{164} Fourth, the forty billion dollars per year in tax subsidies were not included in the superficial budget and these tax advantages and loopholes were never debated to see if they were having their intended purpose.\textsuperscript{165} And fifth, through a variety of bureaucratic steps, the legislative branch gave up much of its oversight abilities and relinquished its power as a co-equal branch of the government. These structural and managerial lapses explained why Congress did such a poor job of managing the resources of the federal government and the nation’s economy.\textsuperscript{166}

A year before the 1973 recession, with unemployment hovering at six percent, Proxmire argued that too much spending on the Vietnam War and countless domestic social problems would produce simultaneous unemployment and inflation. Along with addressing government waste and the need to prioritize spending, \textit{Uncle Sam} also provided a historical and contemporary exposé of American budget failures. With statistics on jobs and unemployment, charts on nuclear capacity, foreign aid and tax loopholes, Proxmire revealed how the big decisions that guide the nation’s economy were not benefiting the plurality of Americans and how big expenditures abroad, such as foreign aid, seldom served the professed purpose of aiding the poor and engendering international security.

The forty billion dollars in tax preferences, privileges, and loopholes created a similar domestic situation. Rather than assist farmers, small businesses, and families, in

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 253. \textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 36. \textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 35. \textsuperscript{166} Proxmire, \textit{Uncle Sam}, 248.}
many situations, these national programs in fact assisted the well-to-do and re-distributed wealth upwards. Uncle Sam provided charts outlining how between 1950 and 1973, a period of unprecedented growth for American corporations, taxes collected from corporations as a percentage of overall tax revenue declined by more than one-third. Proxmire’s point was not merely to expose the problem of corporate tax loopholes, but to educate the American people regarding different types of taxation, how each impacted society in different ways, and were thus some of the most important policy decisions.

From property and sales to income and capital gains taxes, each produced different effects on the economy. Proxmire showed how high-income people with vast quantities of “unearned” income paid very little in taxes, while those who worked for a paycheck paid at the highest rates. The bottom line, according to Proxmire, was that the current tax system benefited corporations and the wealthy at the expense of the working class.

Proxmire warned against raising taxes, but called for the elimination of tax loopholes, and for prioritizing an efficient budget. A detailed study of the impact and benefits of tax breaks should first be conducted before Congress even considered maintaining them. His book called for a pragmatic budget approach, weighing the urgent need for welfare reform, aid to cities, health care, mass transit, education, and environmental protection with the countless military and foreign-aid expenditures. However, the book did not fall into the traditional “liberal” camp that supported all

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167 Ibid., 35.
168 Proxmire, One Foot in Washington, 127-128. She recounts how Proxmire took the job of educating his constituents very seriously. During Proxmire’s first full-term a provision for withholding the tax on dividend interest was debated and his office received approximately 16,000 letters in just ten days. All received a response with an explanation of the tax law because many did not understand the proposal’s impact.
169 Proxmire, Uncle Sam, 171.
domestic programs. According to Proxmire’s analysis, many of the nation’s programs were wasteful and represented poor investments.\textsuperscript{170}

A supporter of environmental protection, Proxmire sought economical solutions to pollution and other land-use issues. He proposed a Regional Water Quality Act to charge for pollution. The act was estimated to cost eight to ten billion dollars less than any of the current schemes where the government paid the bill to address pollution after toxins had already been released into the environment.\textsuperscript{171} From an outside perspective, a program that was designed to save money was the logical choice, but not so in the state of American politics at the time. It was easier to find corporate, labor, and Congressional support for cost-intensive programs as they channeled federal funds back to the public sector and thus generated support regardless of efficacy. Special interests were more likely to support an expensive inefficient program, Proxmire believed, rather than an affordable, effective program.

This was precisely the situation for public irrigation projects that directed federal funds to a specific region or state. Proxmire presented several examples of poorly thought-out irrigation programs, colorfully describing them as “boondoggles—” a term that he often used to describe pork-barrel and mismanaged projects. Through federally

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 32-38. Among many examples of wasteful domestic programs are funding for environmental restoration, which like irrigation projects, prove to be popular because of local job creation. Proxmire addressed the source of the issues, explaining how the nation has an environmental problem because there is no cost associated with pollution. He describes environmental abuse as a “free lunch” to business because, “The polluters are not required to bear the costs that their actions generate.” An industry can spew toxins into the air, waterways, and soil and despite massive environmental damage, the business pays no price for harming public resources. Proxmire argued that government paying the bill to reverse industrial pollution was never going to solve the problem. The federal government had already spent $5.4 billion constructing waste treatments plants while over the same period of time industrial pollution continued to increase and water quality declined. Proxmire found it illogical for Congress to continue their current course of debating how much to spend on additional clean-up projects.

\textsuperscript{171} Proxmire, \textit{Uncle Sam}, 33.
funded irrigation projects, the federal government was financing the creation of more crop land while also paying farmers on productive land not to grow crops. Proxmire believed that the more the government spent, the worse inflation would become, and that inefficient programs and bureaucratic waste would exacerbate the nation’s financial woes. Proxmire warned of unemployment and inflation long before they reached new historical levels in the middle of the 1970s.

Chapter five, “Setting Priorities: Cuts in Military and Foreign-Aid Spending,” attacked wasteful military spending. It also took on what Proxmire described as the “right wing propaganda machine” that proclaimed the US strategically disadvantaged, or well on its way to becoming second-rate to the Soviet Union. Proxmire’s research outlined megatons, warheads, and launchers, showing the US holding over twice the number of stationary nuclear weapons as the Soviet Union. This American stationary arsenal also contained more than fourteen times the number of warheads necessary to destroy thirty percent of the Russian population along with seventy-six percent of its industry, a level of destruction deemed catastrophic. These numbers did not include the 3,000 to 4,000 tactical nuclear weapons that further increased American nuclear superiority. Proxmire called the situation “nuclear overkill” and outlined how military pundits from the secretary of defense to the retired military men on the American Security Council

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172 Ibid., 48. In one stand-out case along the Upper Colorado River, over $2,000 per acre was spent to reclaim land worth $100 per acre that would then be able only to grow marginal crops used for animal feed. The Wisconsin Senator was very aware of the needs and concerns of farmers and invested a lot of time into understanding the farming industry of his home state. In a rare example of compromising his principles, Proxmire caved to his constituents in late 1976 regarding federal funding of the Kickapoo Dam. Proxmire’s original position was that the cost of the public works project that would create a recreational lake greatly outweighed the potential benefits. After months of debate with the areas residents, Proxmire relented and agreed not to stop the project.

173 Ibid., 61.
continued publicly to denigrate America’s nuclear superiority in order to justify expanded military budgets.¹⁷⁴

When it was published in 1972, *Uncle Sam: The Last of the Bigtime Spenders* represented Proxmire’s concerted attempt to share accumulated knowledge from nearly fourteen years in the Senate. It explained from an insider’s perspective why Congress was doing such a poor job of leading the nation and managing its resources. Proxmire reiterated his 1958 criticism of then Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson, implying that little had changed. Without naming the names of his colleagues, he described how committee control led virtually all legislation and hearings to be held behind closed doors and carried out with insufficient information. Proxmire’s main thrust was that the legislative branch had not outlined its plans, goals or objectives. No national priorities were established, thus existing programs were seldom evaluated for their overall effectiveness.¹⁷⁵

According to Proxmire, in theory Congress is a co-equal branch of the government, but in actuality the executive branch and special interests set priorities and dictated the national agenda. Proxmire implored the public to become involved and to be better informed with the help of experts. Proxmire’s political positions were based on principles rather than liberal or conservative ideology. Proxmire sought efficiency in government and believed that once a reasonable level of national defense was reached, the remaining resources should go towards social programs to address pressing needs such as housing, education, environmental protections, and health care.

¹⁷⁴ Proxmire, *Uncle Sam*, 124.
¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 243-253.
Proxmire and Environmental Protections

In addition to his water protection bill, Proxmire engaged many environmental issues throughout the 1970s. In a biting press release in November 1971, he called President Nixon’s secretary of agriculture nominee, Earl Butz, “a far more serious threat to the environment than to the family farm.” Quoting the nominee, Proxmire revealed Butz’s lack of respect for environmentalists, his denial that Lake Erie was dead and his belief in the continued use of DDT, antibiotics, and chemicals in America’s food supply. Proxmire stated, “Mr Butz is clearly on record with the conclusion that we must either use chemicals and antibiotics to the hilt in producing the nation’s food, or starve to death.” Proxmire’s strong flair for publicity was used to bring negative attention to a nominee who did not support the interests of small farmers or respect the environment.

Throughout the early 1970s, Proxmire criticized the Air Force for conducting bombing practice on a small island off San Antonio Bay, the wintering site for an endangered species of whooping crane. When the Air Force finally abandoned its use in 1975, the Navy then wanted to use a portion of the island for flight training. With support from the Department of the Interior, and continuous pressure from Proxmire, the birds eventually became protected. Both branches of the military relinquished claim to the island and it became a wildlife management zone and park in 1978, ensuring the protection of the fewer than fifty remaining wild whooping cranes.

Although a minor environmental success, this represented Proxmire’s ability to work at a single issue for years. Proxmire also saw failures within the Environmental

177 Ibid., M44 738 Box 117, Folder 23. Press release 9.17.1975
Protection Agency (EPA), established in 1970. Before his Senate Appropriations Subcommittee in May 1974, he pointed out several examples of poor management by the EPA that undermined its ability to protect the environment. In detailed reports, Proxmire showed how the EPA increasingly transferred responsibilities to private consulting firms and local municipalities. An audit revealed private firms reaping excessive profits from EPA supplied funds.\(^{178}\)

In addition to his critique of the EPA, Proxmire continued his attacks on the SST by citing its negative environmental impacts. Even though the federal government pulled funding for SST development in the United States, the Concord SST, a joint effort of the United Kingdom and France, was slated to begin commercial service in 1976. In March 1975, Proxmire criticized both the Federal Aviation Administration and the EPA for failing to enforce noise pollution standards on the Concord SST, which was twenty to thirty percent louder than other commercial aircraft. Additionally, the plane released four to seven times the average carbon monoxide emissions during take-offs and landings, making it one of the most fuel inefficient modes of transportation in existence. Considering that a trans-Atlantic flight cost over $1,400, Proxmire noted, “that at those prices, the Concord will be little more than a luxury liner for the wealthy.” In a time of energy consciousness and economic restraint, Proxmire saw no reason to relax environmental standards for the Concord.\(^{179}\)

\(^{178}\) Ibid., M44 738 Box 117, Folder 23. Press release May 11, 1975.
\(^{179}\) Ibid., M44 738 Box 117, Folder 23. Press release March 8, 1975.
Involved in a Wide Variety of Issues

Proxmire extensively prepared for debates, personally reading piles of reports and statistics and leveraging the skills of his staff. In order to practice for public performances, he invited members of his staff to debate him on issues. Most weeks he held an impromptu debate, allowing a staff member to pick the topic and his or her position. Even more extensive preparations were held before major public appearances. Most of Proxmire’s staff members were male, which was common for the period, but by the mid to late 1970s Elinor Bachrach was an important member of his Banking Committee staff. Describing the forty-to-fifty times in which Proxmire appeared on national programs such as Meet the Press or Face the Nation, five or six aides and staff members would gather to grill Proxmire at length on the issues.

Proxmire became an expert on a wide variety of topics. By the mid-1970s, he was involved in an extremely wide array of issues: ethics and collusion in the financial sector, settlement costs on home purchases, the safety of the Soviet space program, the failures of the Department of Housing and Urban Development to meet its objectives, the practice of mortgage companies redlining, the ineffectiveness of the 1973 Israel Airlift, Medicaid over payments, cost overruns on new hospitals by the Veterans Administration, gaps in the United State’s space program, and specific departmental

181 Shuman, Interview.
issues such as the poor performance of the the Energy Research and Development Administration of the federal government in providing equal opportunity to women and minorities.\textsuperscript{185}

The issues and concerns that he addressed also included creating stricter condominium laws for consumers’ protection, criticizing American contractors for bribing foreign officials for contracts, insisting upon public accountability by the Federal Reserve, decrying boondoggles such as improvements to airports without flight service, seeking to eliminate extravagant gift giving among US foreign officials, filling the need for emergency housing while providing job growth, exposing the questionable use of minorities as servants in the military, poor management of grant funds by the National Science Foundation, and even defending the Central Intelligence Agency as necessary to national security. If the potential to economize the government, protect the environment, highlight an injustice, or reveal a conflict of interest existed, it was likely that Proxmire had a well-thought-out position and was vocally involved.\textsuperscript{186}

Chairman of the Banking Committee

With time, Proxmire gained seniority in the Senate. By the mid-1970s, when he took a position on an issue, it was no longer as an ineffectual dreamer. The man from La Mancha had become a powerful and nationally respected figure. On January 5, 1975 the front page of \textit{The New York Times} showcased Proxmire’s financial expertise and his ascension to the upper echelons of senatorial power. After seventeen years in the Senate, and with continuous power shuffles, Proxmire had become chairman of the Banking

\textsuperscript{185} The issues without citation in this paragraph are original press releases available in “Senator William Proxmire Archives,” State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Box 158, Folder 15.

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., Box 158, Folder 15.
Committee. The previous chairman had chosen to take over the Foreign Relations Committee following the departure of J. William Fulbright from the Senate. The article provided a multifaceted view of the new chairman, including a biographical sketch that outlined his reputation for non-stop work and his status in the Senate as a political loner. It showcased his volunteer work serving food at a Salvation Army hostel in Madison, Wisconsin, and riding along with the local police force on Christmas Day.\textsuperscript{187}

Despite Proxmire being one of the most senior senators, the article stated that, “he is not a member of the ‘inner’ club” and rather than have drinks and rub elbows after work, he prefers to jog and walk the nearly five miles home each night. Proxmire was now in his mid-sixties and although the article talked of him walking and jogging home, according to his personal records, he usually opted to take a cab home in the evening. Nonetheless, the article noted his reputation as an eccentric with unconventional methods. Describing his shortcomings, a lobbyist intimate with the Banking Committee stated, “Proxmire’s one big problem is that he doesn’t develop alliances with other members of Congress. But they respect him for doing his homework and knowing the facts.” What limited Proxmire’s influence in the Senate was also his greatest asset. He earned the reputation as one of the hardest working Senators and could afford to stand alone because he knew his subjects well, was untouched by significant scandals, and stood outside the reach of lobbyists and special interests.\textsuperscript{188}

As the new Banking chair, Proxmire had an lengthy agenda. Several immediate reforms included more oversight of the Federal Reserve and opening the banking industry

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid.,
to competition, proposals he had championed for years. In *Uncle Sam, The Last of the Bigtime Spenders*, Proxmire had described how Congress delegated the power to coin and regulate money to the Federal Reserve Board, but argued that although an agent of Congress, that agency was seldom accountable to Congress and instead supported the interests of the banking industry rather than the public good. In a *New York Times* article, Proxmire explained how a similar problem existed with the Controller of the Currency, the official charged with issuing national bank charters. Annually, the controller had established very few new bank charters, thus restricting competition, serving the interests of the existing banks, and limiting the options available to consumers. With even larger financial reforms in mind, Proxmire also sought to strengthen the 1970 Fair Credit Reporting Act by setting ceilings on consumer credit and mortgages rates. As Banking Chair, Proxmire inherited a very powerful position, would be able to address financial issues more effectively, and have increased access to the media.

**A High Profile Politician: Perfecting the Press Release**

In terms of printed news coverage, Senator Proxmire was extremely visible in 1975, his name appearing some 268 times in *The New York Times*. Proxmire learned how to utilize Senate committee hearings for maximum impact, publish well reviewed books, keep his Wisconsin constituents well informed with detailed monthly newsletters, and to master the art of the press release. He employed wit and criticism to stimulate public

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interest in a wide variety of issues. His office produced a high volume of quality press releases, usually several each week, and made special effort to keep them constantly flowing. On March 25, 1975 his office secretary sent Proxmire a memorandum which stated: “FYI – We have no releases this weekend or coming up next week.” Proxmire responded by forwarding it to Howard Shuman (his chief of staff) with the handwritten message: “Howard. What gives? Are we running out of steam? Let’s get moving!”

Throughout 1975, his office sent out a barrage of press releases. In March, Proxmire created a winning formula with the official monthly “Golden Fleece Award.”

As a member of the National Science Foundation Appropriations Subcommittee in 1975, Proxmire was charged with oversight of the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) $800 million annual budget. In mid-January, he sent out a press release critical of the foundation and quoted from an internal evaluation. Produced at his request, the findings of the report “clearly demonstrate that serious deficiencies continue to exist in the evaluation and dissemination of scientific research that has cost the American taxpayer billions of dollars over the last twenty years.” In the report, the NSF recognized weaknesses in its criteria for evaluating research results and the lack of a systematic way of determining whether a funded project was successful. Project evaluation information was “small” and “fragmentary,” but even more disconcerting to the senator was a lack of agency records. In colorful language his press release described these shortcomings in the following terms:

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192 Proxmire, One Foot in Washington, 140.
In fact the NSF has not only failed to carefully review the results of the work it funds but does not even have a master file listing projects completed over the twenty-five year life of the agency. Is this any way to run an airline—or an institution spending over $800 million a year? Obviously not. 194

Proxmire concluded the press release by pledging to press for reforms and results in the coming weeks, and by offering the public access to the full report.

Proxmire publically re-engaged the NSF seven weeks later with a volley of critical press releases. Four of his fourteen press releases in March attacked aspects of the foundation, including favoritism to a handful of larger universities, a poor record on fostering equal opportunities for blacks and women, and appropriations to projects of questionable merit. Another press release attacked the National Institute of Health for funding research investigating the sexual habits of female college students, with a focus on contraceptives. Criticizing human research the following week created a national stir and launched Proxmire’s monthly Golden Fleece Award.

A Formula for Success: The Golden Fleece Award

In the spring of 1975, Proxmire declared, “My choice for the biggest waste of the taxpayer’s money for the month of March has to be the National Science Foundation’s squandering of $84,000 to try to find out why people fall in love.” With the authority of Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee handling funding for the NSF, Proxmire wrote, “This was the first in a series of monthly awards which would be climaxxed by an annual biggest waste of the year award.”195 Exhibiting his wit and penchant for publicity, in April Proxmire dubbed the award the “Golden Fleece,” and once again gave it to the NSF, this time for granting over $500,000 for research into facial expressions of rats,

194 Ibid., Box 158. Folder 1.
195 Ibid., Box 117. Folder 23.
monkeys, and humans. The research focused on the conditions that induce jaw clenching.  

In May, the following month, the award went to the Selective Service System and the Army Corps of Engineers for spending $98,029 to study the concept of the all-volunteer army in a number of foreign countries two years after the United States had implemented it. Proxmire did not see why the government would study the impact of a policy within foreign nations after it had been decided domestically. Other awards that year went to Congress for spending lavishly on its members, the Bureau of Land Management for inflating contract prices with excessive paperwork, the Federal Aviation Administration for studying the body measurements of airline stewardess trainees and to the Department of the Navy for using governmental planes and fuel to fly 1,334 officers to the national Tailhook Association meeting—a private, non-governmental organization. Other federally funded projects that ignited Proxmire’s ire in 1975 included a $102,000 study of the behavior of drunken fish, and excessive use by the administrator of the Federal Energy Administration of chartered Air Force and other aircraft in order to convince local business and civic groups of the need to conserve fuel. He also attacked the White House for drastic spending increases as nearly four million dollars were allocated for fiscal year 1976 on “consultants, contingencies travel and high-level personnel while calling for austerity from the rest of the government.”

In December, he awarded the “Fleece of the Year” to the Department of the Air Force for owning and operating an exclusive fleet of jets solely to transport top government officials. The initial cost of the twenty-three plush jets was $66.7 million

196 Ibid.
with an additional $6 million per year for operations. With such high operational costs and with the availability of commercial flights for the vast majority of the routes, Proxmire argued that “Commercial flights would not only save the government hundreds of thousands of dollars—if not millions—but they would also help the depressed U.S. Airline industry.” Proxmire was always seeking a simpler, more cost-effective solution.\(^\text{197}\)

Picking the Golden Fleece Award each month was an activity that involved Proxmire’s entire staff. The first official award on March 11, 1975 was the work of the senator, but his staff helped research and develop Fleeces for the rest of the year, including the official Fleece of the year chastising the Air Force’s fleet of luxury liners. An able body of researchers, Proxmire’s staff was very active and largely responsible for the hundreds of press releases that his office released by the early 1970s.\(^\text{198}\) Proxmire reviewed and edited the press releases and taught his staff how to add humor and sarcasm, bringing dry topics to life and fostering an emotional connection and indignation that resonated strongly with the public.\(^\text{199}\)

The office received a steady stream of opinions about all of Proxmire’s activities, and in their monthly constituent newsletter began soliciting ideas for future Fleeces in May 1975. After a synopsis of the March and April Fleeces, the May newsletter asked, “If you have any suggestions for my next ‘golden fleece’ award, please write to me in Washington.”\(^\text{200}\) Responses and suggestions poured in from across the country and their authors varied from a Wisconsin resident who opposed National Endowment for the Arts

\(^{197}\) Ibid., Box 158. Folder 1.
\(^{198}\) Ibid., Box 164. Folder 50.
funding of barn murals to a California man’s tongue-in-cheek proposal to research his dog’s behavior.\textsuperscript{201}

Proxmire wrote personal responses to many constituent letters, both those that supported his positions and those that criticized him. In jest, Proxmire told the California man about his partiality to his own cat “Colors” but maintained, “I would not want to have a closed mind concerning your proposed dog research. But I would want to think it would benefit the majority of our citizens.” Further explaining the award criteria, he wrote, “Otherwise, I am afraid I will have to suggest that you finance your project privately, as I have suggested about many other projects.”\textsuperscript{202} Responding to critical letters proved an even more involved task for Proxmire and his office. Proxmire the debater stood firm on his many positions, even against hostile and potentially powerful constituents in his home state. Responses from Proxmire’s office answered concerns point by point, justifying their position and often including supplementary documents in order more fully to explain an issue.\textsuperscript{203}

Responding to the president of a manufacturing company in Wisconsin critical of the Senator’s handling of a Fleece Award, Proxmire answered each concern, justified his position, and concluded the letter:

If a Senator or Congressman can be sued for criticizing the builder of the B-1 bomber, a company getting a tax loophole, a bank getting a government subsidy, a trade union for an excessive wage settlement with a government body, etc., then we have muzzled the Congress of the United States.

\textsuperscript{203} Ibid., M55 738. Box 117. Folder 14. See form letter in response to support of Hutchinson lawsuit which included enclosures.
Proxmire saw the purpose of Congress as debating issues and coming to reasonable conclusions. He believed that discourse furthered the public’s interests by creating a forum in which programs and proposals could be openly debated and judged.204

Proxmire was very conscious of public concerns and kept a detailed compilation of public responses to his politics as early as 1959. His office received around ten thousand pieces of correspondence each month and made great effort to respond to each.205 By the mid-1970s, these statistics were tabulated by computer and office printouts titled “Robo Reports” were printed monthly.206 These reports, issued approximately every few weeks, provided an outline of the public’s general concerns and of the overall reception of the Golden Fleece Awards.207 If an issue was of significant concern, it was given a title such as “Pro: Abortion” and “Abortion vs” which tallied ninety-four and one-hundred and seventy-four responses respectively for the period beginning on March 17 and ending April 4, 1975.208

The first tabulated responses to the Golden Fleece Awards were received in the period April 7 through April 21, 1975. The office received sixty-nine responses against the Senator and one hundred and ninety-one in support of his first Golden Fleece to love researchers and the NSF. A new category was also created during the same period titled, “Wasteful Projects,” which logged fifty-two responses, perhaps an accounting of the

205 Proxmire, One Foot in Washington, 124 & 128.
207 Ibid., M55 738. Box 86. Contains hundreds of “Robo Reports.” The source of each response is not clear, but it is assumed that the totals for each issue include letters, phone calls, and telegrams. Some issues were driven by large lobbying campaigns and when responses to such issues are in the thousands it is also assumed that they were either form letters or the result of a phone bank effort.
suggestions received for future Fleeces. Out of the sixty-seven categories for the mid-
April period, only opposition of aid to Vietnam, gun control, and responses to the Bartlett
Amendment, which proposed eliminating federal funding of abortions, received more
responses than the one-hundred and ninety-one supporting Proxmire’s criticism of love
research. In the period April 22 through May 9, 1975, the number supporting criticisms
of love research dropped to twenty, with ten against studies that involved sex. An
additional fifty-nine responses addressed wasteful projects while the number of responses
to abortion, aid to Vietnam and gun control all remained in the hundreds.

The final twenty-six responses regarding love research were received in the
period between May 12 through May 30, 1975 and all supported Proxmire. Abortion
responses dropped just below one hundred, aid to Vietnam down to thirty-six, whereas
correspondence about gun control took the top spot. In addition, the office logged six
proposals for future Golden Fleece Awards. Proxmire’s criticisms of love research did
not prove to be a long-lasting issue for the senator, nor did it generate the highest number
of responses. However, the issue humorously engaged the public’s dissatisfaction of
government waste and established a formula that became widely popular. Proxmire
issued a Golden Fleece Award every month for the following fourteen years, up to the
last month of his fifth consecutive congressional term in 1988. For a generation of
Americans the Golden Fleece became a household phrase—synonymous with
irresponsible government spending.

210 Ibid., M55 738. Box 86. “Robo Reports.” April 22 through May 9, 1975. The number of responses
against gun control were over 4,000 and likely the result of a concerted national lobbying effort.
Chapter 3

“A Scientist’s Love Story”\(^1\): Elaine Hatfield and Relationship Science

It is far less important to be brilliant than to be fiercely determined. Dogged does it. When you are knocked around you have to bounce back.\(^2\)

--Professor Elaine Hatfield, Interview in *Human Behavior and Evolutionary Society*, 2007

Introduction

The research career of Elaine Hatfield spans five decades. When she graduated from Stanford University in 1963 with a Ph.D. in psychology, women were either discouraged from pursuing careers as researchers or told outright that they were not welcome as university faculty. Her determination and perseverance allowed her to overcome institutionalized sexism and earn a tenured faculty position at the University of Minnesota in 1964. Over the next two decades she designed and carried out dozens of original research projects and publish countless papers in a variety of sub-fields within psychology. Like Senator Proxmire who was considered a national economic expert by the early 1970s, Hatfield’s contributions were so copious and significant, that she was noted as the most cited social psychologist in 1970.\(^3\) This distinction would last for nearly two decades, and was largely the result of her work that established her as a public intellectual, which involved interpersonal attraction. With the help of her research associate Ellen Berscheid, Hatfield is one of the founding principals of the sub-field within psychology of interpersonal attraction—the study of romantic relationships—and


\(^2\) “Featured Interview: Elaine Hatfield,” *Human Behavior and Evolutionary Society*, E-Newsletter (Summer 2007), 1-10.

responsible for substantial contributions to the scientific understanding of how love and
attraction function. Dating, romance, and relationships had been all been personally
difficult for Hatfield, and she poured her professional energies into experiments designed
to better understand these often confusing and mysterious emotions.

A researcher by training, Hatfield's professional carer shifted from the laboratory
and conducting experiments to that of a public figure. Having created an understanding of
love based upon experimental data, she was then thrust into the political arena and forced
to defend her work against the criticisms of Senator Proxmire. She addressed the national
controversy surrounding men and women’s relationships by presenting up to date
scientific research in a format accessible to a general audience. It was her personal
problems that directed the topics of her professional research.

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the establishment of psychology as
a professional discipline in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century,
focusing on the values and beliefs that impacted women's participation. It then follows
the field through the first half of the twentieth century, including World War II,
addressing the challenges that female psychologists faced. Although women accounted
for more than half of the field's advanced degrees by 1944, their professional roles
remained heavily proscribed. The remainder and bulk of the chapter focuses on the life
and career of Elaine Hatfield. In the mid-1970s, at the height of public debates about the
roles of men and women, her work proved very controversial and jettisoned her into
national debates involving men and women’s relationships.
The Birth of Psychology in America

Toward the end of the nineteenth century the development of the field of psychology in the United States was largely the result of G. Stanley Hall. He was the first American to receive a doctorate in the field. Hall’s degree was from Harvard and William James was his adviser in the early 1870s. James is often cited as the father of modern psychology for his pioneering work in psychological theory.⁴ There were no psychology departments in America at the time of Hall’s graduation. After a few additional years of study in Europe, Hall returned to the United States and was limited to teaching within English and Philosophy departments. Following a successful lecture series in the early 1880s, Hall secured a position at the Johns Hopkins University as a psychologist and established the first psychology lab in America.⁵

Hall guided the fledgling field, founding the *American Journal of Psychology* in 1887, and in 1892 he acted as the first president of the American Psychological Association. As was the case in medicine and law, women were not readily accepted in psychology. While women lacked many basic rights afforded to men, the theory of women's innate moral superiority was widely accepted at the end of the nineteenth century. Women were accepted as experts on many social issues such as child welfare, the prohibition of alcohol, conditions within prisons, public sanitation, prostitution, and other issues addressing human welfare. Excluded from business, politics, and medicine, many women entered the public sphere as social reformers.⁶

As psychology developed into a professional field in the first-half of the twentieth century, traditional values restricted women's full participation. Holding views that were representative of the professional and popular consensus, Hall believed that women who eschewed marriage in favor of a professional career selfishly violated their biological ethic and further jeopardized their own health by compromising their reproductive functions. Social norms and pseudo-scientific theories reinforced the notion that being a homemaker was a woman's proper role. Psychology's formal purpose was to understand the "generalized adult mind," also understood implicitly to be the male mind. Throughout the early stages of the development of American psychology, the female was considered different but complementary in function to the male. The institutionalization of such theories became tangible barriers to women's full participation in the field.7

Universities in America grew vigorously around the turn of the twentieth century, and, along with them, the field of psychology. However, fewer than twenty percent of all college degrees and only six percent of doctorates or their equivalent were awarded to women in 1900. Psychology was foremost an academic enterprise, and resistance to coeducation in graduate school proved the most significant barrier to the inclusion of women. Many schools refused admission and fellowships, while others would not confer degrees upon female graduate students despite their having fulfilled their program's requirements.8

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Even with these barriers, a handful of outstanding female graduate students was able to overcome cultural and institutionalized prejudices and establish themselves in the profession. By 1920, sixty-two women held Ph.D.s in psychology, but more than half were from just three institutions: the University of Chicago, Cornell University, and Columbia University. While the world of social work welcomed women with advanced degrees, most academic institutions did not. A fortunate few found work at women's colleges where they could continue their research, but most ended up in guidance centers, clinics, schools, hospitals, and in assisted living institutions.\(^9\)

The trend of female participation continued, but women’s employment options remained heavily circumscribed. By 1944, women accounted for nearly sixty percent of all psychological employment outside of academia, although they accounted for just thirty percent of all advanced degrees. Women were commonly directed toward clinical work. Conversely, seventy-four percent of all positions in universities and colleges were held by men. A hierarchy between male researchers and female clinical practitioners was firmly established. The higher paid and more prestigious jobs occupied by men were demarcated from the lower compensated clinical work of women.\(^{10}\)

The disruption of World War II impacted the employment of men and women throughout the nation. Many jobs were for the first time made available to women. The militarization of the nation also increased funding to the psychological sciences. Psychiatric, intelligence, and other aptitude tests became important aspects of the military induction process and were developed in order to establish a candidate's fitness for

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\(^9\) Ibid., 10-11.

service. However, the military heavily preferred their psychologists to be male. Only thirty-three of the more than one thousand psychologists who entered the American armed forces throughout World War II were women. Despite the honorable contributions of female psychologists during the war, the vast proportion of funds and opportunities were offered to men. The practice of psychology during the war was carried on almost exclusively by men.\textsuperscript{11}

The situation changed little following the war. The government predicted the need for 6,800 clinical psychologists and vocational advisers to serve the approximately twenty million war veterans. The government poured significant resources into clinical training for advanced degrees, yet the vast majority of funding again went to men. Similarly, business and industry contributed to the expansion of psychology in the post-war period as aptitude and other mental fitness tests were given to job applicants and employees. Yet again the focus was on men to fulfill these roles. The result was that industrial and personal psychology were disproportionally dominated by men in the ensuing decades.\textsuperscript{12}

It is important to keep in mind that Hatfield’s work is part of social psychology, which is a field within psychology that seeks to understand how the individual is influenced by others. Psychology developed in order to better understand how the human mind functions and social psychology developed in order to specifically examine that process in social situations. By the 1920s, psychologists regularly studied face-to-face

behavior and interactions among humans, thus establishing social psychology as a specific field. Throughout the 1930s, research sought to manipulate the behavior and attitudes of subjects by using the judgments of authority figures, and studies of group dynamics was also born. With funding from companies in the 1930s, social psychologists examined modern corporate work situations, and gleaned information through questionnaires. With a growing precision in wording, interviewing, and scaling, the questionnaire became a reliable research tool for interpreting group dynamics.\textsuperscript{13}

This trend continued with the personality and aptitude tests that became a staple of the military indoctrination process. In the post WWII era there was a new emphasis on laboratory experiments in social psychology. The field strove to increase its respectability by creating empirical, laboratory derived data. Many scientists studied specific influences on human relationships that they were able to witness and manipulate in a controlled environment, while others such as Leon Festinger (Hatfield’s adviser at Stanford) sought to develop overarching theories regarding human mental processes and social interactions.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Alice I. Bryan, Ph.D. Psychology Columbia 1934}

Establishing an academic career in a university setting as a researcher and professor remained elusive for most women in the first half of the twentieth century. The career of Alice I. Bryan illuminates some of the barriers women encountered. A woman would have to be better than every male applicant in order even to be considered for a


teaching and research position. Speaking of her academic preparation while working on her Ph.D., Bryan commented:

I wanted to prepare as broadly and soundly as possible for effective competition in the job market, for it was tacitly agreed among the graduate students that men were the preferred candidates both for university instructorships as well as for most teaching positions at the college level. And I did want to teach.\textsuperscript{15}

In addition to meeting departmental requirements, Bryan took a full year of courses at Columbia's Teacher's College in educational and clinical psychology and additional courses in neuroanatomy and neurophysiology in the medical school. Her dissertation was an interdisciplinary experimental research project under a neurophysiology professor and was entitled, “Organization of Memory in Young Children.” Upon graduation in 1934, she was also elected to Columbia's chapter of the national honorary society in sciences.

The ensuing five years proved to be a professional struggle. Bryan applied to various positions at universities offering full-time employment. Instead of receiving permanent employment, she taught college courses part-time, conducted several grant-funded research projects, was employed part-time by an art institute as director of teaching and counseling, and was even hired part-time as consulting psychologist and associate in library service at Columbia's School of Library Service. Finally, in 1939, she was offered a full-time assistant professorship at her alma mater's School of Library Service.

Bryan continued her research and published many studies while also playing important roles on national professional committees in psychology. With the chair of

Harvard's Psychology department, she co-authored well-received studies in 1944, 1946, and 1947. However, professional advancement at Columbia was not forthcoming. A new dean at the School of Library Service made it clear that he intended to reduce women's employment at the school and bluntly told Bryan in a private meeting that “the university is still very much a man's world.” Bryan had compiled a twenty-page curriculum vitae that included publications and professional association appointments in both psychology and library science and personal letters from respected individuals in both fields. Bryan's application for advancement was repeatedly denied.\(^{16}\)

Undaunted, Bryan set about to increase her qualifications for advancement within Columbia's School of Library Service by beginning work on a Master's degree at the University of Chicago in library science. Granted a student fellowship, she was also offered a prestigious position evaluating the effectiveness of librarians as part of a federal grant. Completing the Masters degree in library science in 1951, Byran published her research the following year as the book, *The Public Librarian*. Seventeen years after receiving her Ph.D., she was finally offered a permanent faculty position as an associate professor.\(^{17}\)

Bryan continued to make significant contributions at Columbia's School of Library Services along with fulfilling her teaching duties. She evaluated the requirements of doctoral degrees at Columbia in other departments, made recommendations to the Library School, and developed the school's Ph.D. program. Her promotion to full professor in 1956 was historic. She was the first woman in the history of the Library

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 80.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 82. Also see, Alice I. Bryan, *The Public Librarian* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952).
School to earn the position and title. It took twenty-two years of teaching, researching, publishing, and contributing to professional organizations in two fields before Bryan became a full professor at one of the nation's more progressive universities. Similarly, the career of Elaine Hatfield reinforces how obtaining full-time academic employment remained difficult for promising female psychologists throughout the second third of the twentieth century.

Professor Elaine Hatfield, Ph.D. Stanford 1963

Childhood and Family Background

Engrossed with school from an early age, Elaine Hatfield found her studies to be an escape from a turbulent home life. Born in 1937, Hatfield was raised in the infamous Herman Gardens project of Detroit that once encompassed over 2,000 lower-income housing units. Built during World War II, Herman Gardens met the additional housing needs from the influx of manufacturing jobs as Detroit's factories were re-tooled for the war effort. Hatfield vividly remembers the poverty and abuse she suffered in her youth—from inside and outside the home—noting that, "Detroit was never a good place to live and has always been dangerous." Habitually plagued by poverty, substance abuse, and crime, the project was torn down in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Despite her self-proclaimed shyness and social ineptitude, Hatfield met these challenges with a defiant resolve that never yielded to the bullying of neighborhood boys or to the conflicts with her father that often resulted in a smack. Hatfield refused to play the victim in these abuses. She would stare down her father, especially when in public, aware that

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19 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, January 31, 2012.
others would pass judgment on his violence, her stubbornness pushing him to openly slap her.

Chuck Ewald Hatfield, her father, came from Lincoln County, Kentucky. The son of a "hard-shelled Baptist minister," Chuck Hatfield did not have much time for a formal education and left school after the tenth grade. The rough and tumble world of gun slinging violence made famous by the “Hatfield-McCoy feud” formed Chuck Hatfield's family roots. From the end of the American Civil War through the 1890s, the Hatfields and McCoys fought with often fatal consequences. Sympathetic to the difficulties of her parents’ generation, Hatfield stated, "Kentucky was a really hard place and Detroit wasn't much better. It was a really hard world for that generation." Hatfield's parents had few educational and employment opportunities that would have supported their emotional maturation. Marrying her mother at eighteen left little time for Chuck Hatfield to grow up. As was common following the Great Depression, the family faced economic hardships throughout the late 1930s and 1940s.

In order to support his growing Catholic family, Chuck Hatfield always worked multiple jobs. When asked, Elaine Hatfield easily rattles off a handful of the countless brutish jobs that occupied her father's time, including everything from furniture and piano mover, to mining salt, coal, and ice. None of his jobs paid well or offered a reliable income. Finally, in the mid-1940s, the family enjoyed mild financial stability when Chuck Hatfield became a Detroit police officer. Although the pay was not sufficient to support the family, it was steady and allowed him to limit his other employment to two

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part-time jobs. He continued to work weekends and nights in order to support his wife and three children.  

Hatfield recalls taking her first official job at the local Woolworth's dime store when just thirteen years of age and assuming responsibility for all family meals. Her youngest sister Mary Beth Hatfield was one year old at the time and Patricia Ann Hatfield was eleven years old. Hatfield welcomed the opportunity to cook for the family, as it ensured that meals would no longer be burned, the usual flavor of her mother's fare. Hatfield's mother, Catherine Eileen Kalahar, had a "good hearted helplessness," and was "so shy and timid that you just wanted to take care of her." Hatfield was quick to note that her mother was ill-suited to care for the needs of a growing family. Carrying out the daily chores of cooking and cleaning while maintaining emotional stability required constant coddling and assistance from other family members. Eileen Hatfield's lack of abilities was likely a side effect of being one of six children of a poor family that weathered the 1930s Depression. Her father died of cancer when she was young and her mother was seldom home, as she worked long hours in Grenan's Bakery in order to feed her six children.  

Outside of preparing family meals, Hatfield spent as much time as possible in school as it proved a welcome refuge from the constant conflicts with her father. Much later in life, Hatfield continued to express frustration with her father, especially his policy of taking her paychecks and arbitrarily doling out an unpredictable portion each week. She tried negotiating for a reliable share each week, willing to take a small but consistent

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21 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, January 31, 2012.  
amount. Her father, perhaps because of his own unknown finances or through calculated emotional manipulation, was unwilling to promise his daughter a steady ration. Unable to make financial plans infuriated Hatfield’s logical sensibilities. She never knew how much money she would have for her own necessary school supplies and clothing.²³

Netting fish and grabbing canaries out of cages for shoppers in the pet department at Woolworth's marked the beginning of many after-school jobs for Hatfield. Earning top grades throughout high school, Hatfield also worked as a secretary at a Mooney's Real Estate Company, as a perfumer for the Skunk No Phew, producer of deer musk and other hunting scents, and as a writer for a small paper, the Redford Record, at the rate of one cent per word. She also entered writing contests with success, the most memorable award being the two-hundred dollar grand prize in an essay contest sponsored by the University of Michigan law school.²⁴

Hatfield's steely resolve, while provoking her father, also allowed her to chart her own future. She was always an outstanding student and an episode in the eighth grade solidified her academic trajectory. The high school required a form in which parents were to decide between two courses of study. The first option was a program of workforce training, intended to ready students for employment upon graduation. The second option was a college preparatory curriculum, covering the sciences, mathematics, English, and history. Elaine and her father argued at length about the form, her father refusing to select the college preparatory option.²⁵

²³ Interview with Elaine Hatfield, January 31, 2012.
²⁵ Ibid.
Indefatigable, Elaine erased her father's selection with correction fluid and checked the box that would guide her to college. When she turned in the form at school, her teacher asked why the form had been altered. Elaine responded, "My father changed his mind. He's at work if you want to call him." And thus, a self-described "shy girl who grew up in an oppressive society" seized what little control she could manage and determined her own future.\textsuperscript{26}

A self-described “teachers pet,” she found school a welcome escape from home. With few friends, a “socially incompetent” Hatfield poured her energy into studying. When it came time to apply to college, Hatfield knew that she wanted to go to a top university, but with limited experience, she knew very little about specific colleges. She applied to the only two respected schools that she had heard of: Harvard University and the University of Michigan.\textsuperscript{27}

In 1955, when Hatfield sent out two college applications, Harvard only accepted male students and directed female applicants to Radcliffe, its sister campus. It was not until 1963 that an official integration of the two schools began with the issuance of joint Harvard-Radcliffe diplomas. The merger was finalized in 1977. Hatfield received a reply from Harvard that stated she could not be offered admission, but that she was accepted to Radcliffe with a full scholarship.\textsuperscript{28}

Unaware at the time of Harvard's admissions policies and its arrangement with Radcliffe, Hatfield took her admission letter to her high school counselor. The counselor

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
sympathetically declared that she had been rejected by Harvard and that they were trying to send her to another less prestigious school. Believing that she was rejected by Harvard, she then attended the University of Michigan and accepted a combination of scholarships and work-study in order to cover tuition and expenses.29

**Undergraduate Education at the University of Michigan**

Although it was not the beautifully developed campus that appears today, the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor was a top-tier school by the postwar period. It was a principal recipient of government research grants and by the mid-1960s ranked as one of the premier institutions for graduate work.30 Hatfield thrived in the strong academic environment, and by graduation time she had fulfilled all of the course work for a degree in Russian Literature, Anthropology, Psychology, and English. She received departmental honors in both English and Psychology, which were her official majors.31

Though coeducational, the University of Michigan maintained aspects of sexist segregation that pervaded many institutions at the time, such as a policy that prohibited women from entering the Student Union through the front door.32

Despite Hatfield’s academic achievements, her life remained a social and financial challenge throughout her undergraduate years. Of college life she says, "I was real smart but socially I was like twelve years old." At the time, many women lived in all-female houses off-campus rather than in dormitories. She cleaned and cooked in exchange for her room and board at Adelia Cheever, a cooperative house for poor girls.33

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29 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, January 31, 2012.
31 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, January 31, 2012.
33 Personal correspondence with Elaine Hatfield, September 17, 2012.
Throughout college she held numerous jobs on campus in order to pay for books, clothing, and other necessities. Her social life was not the typical dating and partying of college co-eds. Socially inexperienced, Hatfield recalls having only one or two painfully uncomfortable dates, stating, "Guys didn't ask me out. That was why I wasn't dating. I was scared of guys and dismissive of them if they didn't look right." Yet, Hatfield was happy with her first living experience away from her father. Unfortunately the recently widowed house mother at Adelia Cheever did not know how to manage unconventional young women like Hatfield and others who were more interested in studying and making a career for themselves than finding a husband. The house mother at Adelia Cheever tried to separate and punish the school focused youth, believing that Hatfield and others were gay. The dean was called in to mitigate the situation and ended up removing several of the women from the house.34

Shuffled into new housing, Hatfield recalls being quietly defiant. "I was going to do what I was going to do." She was unaware of the larger cultural context. She was simultaneously confused and adamant. Somehow she had missed the cultural expectation that told her to focus on getting her “Mrs. degree” rather than a Bachelors of Arts. Hatfield simply did not know how to be friendly toward men. Her second house, Helen Newberry, was for upper-class students and she did not have to work for her room and board. However, the new house mother noticed that all of Hatfield's friends were women and that she was not interested in attending parties. The Dean of Women, Deborah Bacon, took Hatfield aside and told her that her best friend, Joan Case, was not welcome

34 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, January 31, 2012.
in Helen Newberry. The dean worried that Case was gay and might be trying to recruit her.  

Lacking the ability to pay for college in the era before federal financial aid, Hatfield received only a tuition scholarship and was provided on-campus work in order to cover her room and board. Access to on-campus jobs also allowed her a small income to pay for personal necessities. Although moved from her first house, she recalls that the relocation was not much of a punishment. Her second house proved much nicer than the first and she no longer had to work for her room and board, at least for the remainder of her first year in college. In the following years Hatfield, lived in a series of less expensive houses and apartments.

**Graduate School at Stanford**

High Graduate Record Exam scores and a stellar academic transcript opened the door to the psychology graduate programs of Yale and Stanford. Hatfield picked Stanford.

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35 Personal correspondence with Elaine Hatfield, September 17, 2012. Deborah Bacon was the last Dean of Women (1950-1961) at the University of Michigan. Leading a remarkably unconventional life, Bacon had dropped out of college in 1924, purchased a used motorcycle and traveled across America accepting a variety of jobs, including as a guard at a women's prison and as a public health assistant, before she officially trained as a nurse. She took her first nursing job in the Alaska Territory and continued studies at New York University and the University of Chicago before assuming practice as a nurse in Kentucky. The outbreak of World War II motivated her to enlist in the Army Nursing Corps and she followed Patton's Third Army across Europe. Returning from war, Bacon used the G.I. Bill to study English literature at Columbia. She carried out her doctoral research in England, received her degree in 1950, and was immediately hired as the Dean of Women and as an assistant professor of English at Michigan. She proved to be a high-profile and controversial figure on-campus. Bacon was actively involved with women's housing and changed student codes and administrative policies in order to improve the comfort and sanitary conditions of her students. She maintained strict conduct codes, however was also known to provide support for her students in times of crisis—especially in cases of rape—making sure that a woman never had to go to the police or be interviewed alone. In an age when most scholarship funds were raised privately, Bacon worked directly with donors and kept such funds away from the university's administration. Stanley R. Levy, the president of the University of Michigan's Interhouse Council, described her as “big-hearted and open-handed. If someone needed something, when she decided there was a need, she'd open her coffers.” However, she was also very strict about what was acceptable behavior for young women. Clashes with the university's president finally led her to resign. She believed that female students should not be allowed to visit men's off-campus residences and vehemently opposed co-educational dormitories. Bacon had wide discretion when it came to grants and scholarships, housing approvals, letters of recommendation, and other documents in a student's file. It is very likely that Bacon played a role in Hatfield's relocation. See Linda Robinson Walker, “The Last Dean of Women,” *Michigan Today* (Summer 2002), http://michigantoday.umich.edu/02/Sum02/mt3j02.html [Accessed February 8, 2012].

and immediately fell in love with its research facilities. She was accepted to work with Doug Lawrence, an experimental psychologist who helped usher in the era of cognitive psychology by changing the understanding of human and animal perception through rat experiments. However, Lawrence was on sabbatical during Hatfield's first year, and she was assigned to be André Weitzenhoffer's graduate assistant. Her role included hypnotizing subjects and testing several methods that evaluated levels of hypnotic depth. Hatfield recalls hating the process of hypnotizing, describing the flamboyant hand gestures, dark room, and lab coat as “creepy.” She worked diligently her first year as a graduate assistant, between 1959 and 1960, carrying out Weitzenhoffer's experiments, and used her experience to fulfill the requirements for the Master’s degree. In 1961 her first scholarly publication, “The Validity of the LeCron Method of Evaluating Hypnotic Depth,” appeared in the Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis.

Before Hatfield's first semester at Stanford was complete, she was saved both from further hypnotizing and from a future studying models of rat behavior with her official adviser Douglas Lawrence. Already a big name in psychology, Leon Festinger recruited Hatfield to work in his lab. For her second year in graduate school, her responsibilities at Stanford also shifted to teaching. She much preferred teaching to hypnotizing subjects, and began conducting research with Festinger. Festinger's free flowing style and limitless support for his students proved to have a lasting impact upon Hatfield's own work in the ensuing decades.

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39 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, January 31, 2012.
Leon Festinger's Contributions to Psychology

By the late 1950s, Festinger was famous in psychology and continued to make significant contributions throughout the 1960s. He is best known for his theory of cognitive dissonance, which suggests that when people are induced to behave in ways that are inconsistent with their beliefs, they are more likely to change their beliefs to fit their behavior than to adjust their behavior to conform to their beliefs. Festinger’s cognitive dissonance theory dominated the journals of social psychology from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. He was also responsible for social comparison theory and contributing the concept of propinquity to social network theory.\textsuperscript{40}

Social comparison theory examines how people evaluate their own opinions and desires by comparing themselves with others and how groups exert pressures on individuals to conform with group norms and goals.\textsuperscript{41} Propinquity describes the role that physical proximity plays in the formation of personal relationships. Whereas it was believed that common interests and tastes were the most important factors leading to friendships and romance, Festinger's studies revealed that proximity was a much better indicator for the development of relationships.\textsuperscript{42}

Festinger's methods for formulating these theories and concepts were innovative, and the approaches utilized by social psychologists were profoundly altered by Festinger's experiments. They were largely grounded in the observation of real world behavior rather than in a laboratory or clinic. Previously such behavior was not

\textsuperscript{40} Elliot Aronson and Lindzey Gannen, eds. \textit{Handbook of Social Psychology} (New York: Random House, 1985), 68.


considered amenable to scientific evaluation. Festinger’s research showed that it is possible to use the scientific method to investigate complex and significant social phenomena outside of a laboratory. For example, cognitive dissonance described the process by which cult members formulated new beliefs when the world did not end in an apocalyptic flood as the cult members had predicted. Cognitive dissonance debuted in Festinger's 1956 case study, *When Prophecy Fails*, revealing how beliefs rather than actions were more likely to change in the presence of new information.43

Social comparison theory and propinquity also derived from Festinger's unconventional methods of experimentation. Funded by a Ford Foundation grant, social comparison theory drew from a wide variety of sources, including research on children, historical evidence, and philosophical thought. His 1954 study explained how individuals look to outside images in order to evaluate their own opinions and abilities.44 Similarly, propinquity resulted from a series of studies that Festinger and colleagues carried out at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the 1950s that examined the social behavior of students within dormitory settings. Both projects proved that researchers could investigate the mechanisms and causal relationships among complex social factors. Previously, social psychologists had limited their research of human behavior to that which could be observed in the laboratory. 45

Festinger's work expanded the ability of the field to examine complex social interactions and thereby reach scientific conclusions on questions once left to

philosophers and clinicians. His work helped bring the laboratory into the real world, allowing social psychologists to address more complex, and thus, more interesting questions such as those about interpersonal relationships and love.

**Leon Festinger’s Role as Elaine Hatfield's Mentor**

As an academic adviser, Festinger served as an inspiring role model and acted as the social glue binding many students and faculty. Hatfield fondly remembers graduate school, stating, “Stanford was wonderful because they had a lunchroom and you didn't have to study for comprehensive exams. You just had to have lunch, because all the professors were there, and all the students were there and they talked about their research. The students hung out as much with faculty as with students.” Hatfield remembers between six and eight graduate students and a handful of professors who spent considerable time together inside and outside of the laboratory. Her social life and studies were joined.\(^{46}\)

Festinger was central to the camaraderie in the psychology department. Hatfield recalls that he continuously took his students out to lunch, showed them around San Francisco, brought them to events with dignitaries, and hosted informal department events. He held Wednesday night meetings—more like parties—when everyone presented his or her research. Students and faculty sang, danced, and drank at the jovial research updates. Hatfield recalls how the students “all hung out at Leon's house all the time,” and she speculated that “He must have had the most unhappy marriage.” She does not remember him ever spending time with his wife. He dedicated all his social time to his students and all of his work time to research. It was this combination of strong

\(^{46}\) Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 2, 2012.
friendships and hard work that Hatfield attributes to the productive research environment at Stanford.47

In her third year of graduate school, Hatfield published “The Effectiveness of 'Overheard' Persuasive Communications,” co-authored with Festinger. The paper covered two experiments examining the influence on a person’s opinion of ostensibly overheard conversations. As predicted, subjects who believed they overheard a conversation were more persuaded by the content than individuals who were provided the information directly. Oddly, this proved true only for individuals with an interest in the content. For example, only smokers were influenced by an overheard conversation regarding smoking and only on-campus residents were influenced by an overheard conversation about the choice to live off-campus. The publication proved that existing theories could not explain the experiment's results. The conclusions contradicted existing models, leading Hatfield and Festinger to state, “The results certainly indicated that the effectiveness of overheard communications is a more complicated matter than has been generally assumed.”48

Though they co-authored only one additional article, Festinger greatly influenced Hatfield's work. In 1964, “Decisions Among Imperfect Alternatives” was published as a chapter in Festinger's book, Conflict, Decisions, and Dissonance. Establishing that very little research addressed the decision-making process, the study proposed that when confronted with undesirable choices, a subject is likely to search for outside alternatives, even when alternatives are improbable.49

47 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 2, 2012.
Despite Festinger’s social and moral support, he was not deeply involved in his students’ research. When it came to formulating and conducting experiments, Festinger was focused on his own cognitive dissonance research. However, Hatfield remembers how once the data was collected, he was so quick that he would eagerly run the statistics in his head: “He loved getting the data. He would be in every day to find out how the results came out. He helped you with statistics enormously.”

Hatfield received limitless support and encouragement from her adviser who never made gender an issue. Hatfield remarks, “Leon was totally egalitarian. He didn't have a discriminatory bone in his body.” Festinger treated his male and female graduate students equally and mistakenly assumed that equality would prevail in the academic world. Hatfield explains how “he was sort of oblivious to the discrimination that existed, because he told me I was the best student he ever had and guaranteed me a job at Harvard, Yale, or Bell Labs.” Festinger's network of contacts, personal fame, and Hatfield's three publications at the time of graduation were not enough to secure a prestigious academic position. As in previous decades, the careers of female scientists and academics were severely limited in 1960s America.

**Relationship Troubles in Graduate School**

To succeed at the various responsibilities of graduate school, including course work, teaching, conducting experiments, and publishing, required a complete and unquestioned commitment to one's work. Hatfield recalls how Festinger was totally dedicated to his research and expected the same of his students. He assumed that all of

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50 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 2, 2012.
51 Ibid., February 2, 2012.
one's energies would be focused on school. Hatfield excelled in such an environment. Recollecting her total commitment, she said “I worked way harder than anyone else because I didn't have a personal life, even though by 1962—when I graduated—I was married.” Emphasizing her ethos under Festinger's tutelage, “I just worked and worked, that was all that I cared about.”

For the socially inexperienced Hatfield, total academic devotion from an early age provided a safe energetic outlet but did not prepare her socially for her first romantic relationship. The grind of graduate school took a toll on everyone in the program. In an interview with the Human Behavior and Evolution Society in 2007, Hatfield recalled how “At one time, all the members of our group were having terrible trouble in their close relationships. Some of us couldn't find anyone to date, others were trapped in unhappy romantic relationships, or getting divorces.” In constant contact with her fellow graduate students, Hatfield remembers everyone sharing personal problems late at night in the laboratory. Although empathetic to their shared plight, Hatfield took a less personal approach to these problems. She began formulating theories and experiments to address romantic problems. “Everyone had romantic problems. But instead of thinking of them in personal terms, I thought about them in analytical terms.”

Hatfield entered into her first romance during her second year at Stanford. While teaching the introduction to psychology course, she became “very good pals” with an undergraduate student who was also “gorgeous.” Hatfield described G. William Walster as “out of it, socially,” and “sort of narcissistic and a brat, but a smart brat.” Their

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52 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 2, 2012.
55 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 2, 2012.
common interest in research provided the space for a strong connection to develop. They became close friends, spending a lot of time together. Hatfield reminisced about how Walster was “excited by research,” and how at the time, “it was truly a wonderful relationship but limited in scope.” Problems loomed for a relationship that revolved around research interests.\textsuperscript{56} For one, the two were from different religious backgrounds.

Walster's family was wealthy and Protestant. His grandmother owned an entire block in Palo Alto that included a hotel and cinema, and his father had done well with other real estate ventures. Hatfield remembers that she was judged as poor trash and treated horribly by the Walsters, who believed that as Walster's senior by a few years, she was using her feminine wiles to take advantage of their son. Of course, the young couple was only brought closer together by the concerted efforts of Walster's family to drive them apart. Hatfield commented that, “We were fully aware that if we just got married Walster's family would let it go, and they \textit{did}.” Although admittedly not “in love,” they married in 1962 as the solution to their parental problems. She describes how she and Walster “were great friends,” but that “it wasn't a traditional marriage.” Outside their shared passion for research, their relationship lacked the usual sparks that inspire marriages. Hatfield described their relationship as one of “just good friends.”\textsuperscript{57}

Near the end of their marriage in 1978, Hatfield and Walster quoted the work of other researchers that evaluated the impact of parents on budding relationships. In \textit{A New Look at Love: A Revealing Report on the Most Elusive of All Emotions}, Walster and Hatfield cited a 1972 article in \textit{Journal of Personality and Social Psychology} titled

\textsuperscript{56} Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 2, 2012.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., February 2, 2012.
“Parental Interference and Romantic Love: The Romeo and Juliet Effect.” The quoted work documented how parental interference appears to intensify romantic feelings and when parents accept a relationship and interfered less, the lovers' passion was more likely to wane. Similarly, Hatfield and Walster's marriage was the result of parental interference, along with a shared interest in research.  

Seeking Academic Employment

When Hatfield graduated from Stanford University in 1963, she had already co-authored an article in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* with Festinger, published two additional articles, and conducted nearly a dozen experiments. She had already established her abilities as a researcher, had years of university teaching experience, and was beginning a promising academic career. However, employment in the field of psychology proved elusive. Many barriers limited a women's professional career in the otherwise booming postwar period.

Even though Festinger was well connected in the academic world and promised her a job anywhere, psychology department chairs “were frank in saying that a woman would not fit in at their universities.” In 1963, Harvard explained to Hatfield that a female professor simply could not manage and teach male students. Hatfield's work ethic and humility served her well during that challenging first year after graduate school. Festinger was friends with a dean at the University of Minnesota and obtained a job for Hatfield at the University's Student Activities Bureau. Hatfield was hired as a social

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59 “Featured Interview,” *Human Behavior and Evolution Society*.

60 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 2, 2012.
activities co-coordinator and charged with arranging dances. Rather than being incensed by the blatant sexism, she was sincerely grateful for a reliable job. When young, her family was borderline destitute and getting through college and graduate school had always been a struggle. Hatfield stated, “I was a depression child. I ran out of money all the time as an undergraduate and I'd live for a couple of months on lentil soup.” A salaried position at a respectable university was a great step up from financial uncertainty.\footnote{Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 2, 2012.}

In addition to her official position, several of Festinger's ex-students worked in the social psychology laboratory at the University of Minnesota and they helped Hatfield continue her research in their laboratory. During the student activities that she organized, Hatfield furthered her research of dating behavior. She endeared herself with the other professors in the social psychology laboratory and department by teaching two social psychology courses without pay. Hatfield compares the laboratory environment to Stanford's, both were “inspirational and collaborative.” A product of Festinger's influence, it was directed by his former student Elliot Aronson. It was a well-funded facility and considered one of the best social psychology labs in the nation.

Hatfield was genuinely grateful for the opportunity to work in the Social Psychology Laboratory at the University of Minnesota, even though her official role was limited to organizing student events. She consciously stayed under the radar that first year, noting that no one in the administration knew of her roles teaching courses and conducting research. Having not “offended anyone,” she was offered a tenure position in
the psychology department the following year. When asked how the offer came about, she responds, “I guess the people in the lab pushed for me to be hired and there was tons of money.” Then, reflecting on the historical uniqueness of the 1960s, Hatfield offers, “There was so much money around, that it probably made it possible to hire a woman who was borderline in another era.” Indeed, at the time, departments were flush with cash and hiring another faculty member did not require excessive debate. The personal difficulty that Hatfield faced when trying to obtain professional employment inspired her to conduct two studies in the 1970s, one addressing discrimination in the college admissions process for undergraduate students, and another investigating discrimination in job interviews at the national Psychological Association’s annual meeting.

**Sexism in Academia**

Despite the official hire and career protection offered by tenure, sexism remained rampant and affected all female employees. Although a disciple of Festinger, the lab coordinator Aronson did not subsume the egalitarian values of his adviser and was “very chauvinistic.” It was during Hatfield’s first years at the University of Minnesota that an enduring relationship with Ellen Bersheid began. Berscheid, a graduate student at the time, received the demeaning nick-name “Blondie” and was required by Aronson to guarantee that she would not have children before being offered a position as a graduate teaching assistant. She applied again for funding her second year but was denied because

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63 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 2, 2012.
Aronson prioritized awards by sex. He gave male applicants first rights to department resources.\footnote{Ibid., February 2, 2012.}

The treatment of women as subordinates was further institutionalized at the University of Minnesota. Hatfield recalls clear directions by the department chair that women were not allowed to hang their coats in the faculty cloak room, nor were they allowed to eat at the elegant “Faculty Club” lunch room that featured starched table cloths and views of the river and city skyline. Women and university staff were relegated to the “Cafe,” a clamorous, counter style cafeteria. One day, she and Berscheid entered the Faculty Club and sat at a table occupied by a handful of their psychology colleagues. Immediately, each man began making polite excuses, until the table was cleared, leaving half-eaten plates of food and two humiliated women.\footnote{“Featured Interview: Elaine Hatfield,” Human Behavior and Evolution Society Summer 2007: 1-10.}

With plentiful jobs and few economic constraints, some of the traditional barriers preventing employment of women and other minorities were reduced. Hatfield conceded that “historically, some things trump economics, and racism and sexism usually trump economics.” Reflecting further, she stated, “They always had women in academia... there were always women around but they were never given the prestigious jobs.” Hatfield exhibited a unique combination of attributes that allowed her to be successful within such a constrained environment. A tireless researcher, her academic work was beyond reproach, and personally she was so affable and quiet that she did not make waves.

Despite a growing feminist consciousness, she was successful because she avoided overt conflict.\footnote{Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 2, 2012.}
1963-1966: Beginning a Career at the University of Minnesota

With her ability to navigate around conflict, sexism did not limit Hatfield's professional productivity during her tenure at the University of Minnesota. She authored four chapters in Festinger's 1964, text *Conflict, Decision, and Dissonance*, a product of research that began at Stanford. Her first published experiment on interpersonal attraction, “The Effect of Self-Esteem on Romantic Liking,” appeared in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* in 1965 and featured an experiment originally conducted at Stanford. The article concluded that when self-esteem was deliberately lowered, the test subject found others more attractive, but there were other contributing factors which would require further investigation. She also took advantage of her previous role as social coordinator and the first-rate laboratory facilities in order to continue to investigate aspects of dating behavior.\(^{68}\)

When asked about the public and professional response to “The Effect of Self-Esteem on Romantic Liking,” Hatfield laughed and replied, “Little. Tiny. In the field [of psychology] they used to say that the average number of people that read your articles was three to seven.” Since romantic research was seldom addressed and not yet a “hot topic,” perhaps even fewer took interest in the article.\(^{69}\) When asked about funding for the study and whether such a study could jeopardize her career, Hatfield replied, “It wasn't

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funded,” and “I didn't think about that, I never thought about career building really. There were plenty of jobs, or at least I thought that jobs were just hanging from the trees to be plucked off. I just really didn't think about that.” Hatfield had found an interesting question, formulated and carried out an experiment, and published the results.70

Since childhood, Hatfield exhibited an unusually strong sense of her academic prowess, but her intellectual self-esteem did not permeate other aspects of her life. She explained, “I was really split. Socially I didn't have any self-esteem, but intellectually I thought I was the smartest person that ever existed.” Her success as a graduate student at Stanford and the support of Festinger contributed to a strong faith in her abilities as a researcher. Hatfield commented that by that point in her career, “criticism of my research didn't really faze me. Although I would have been crushed if someone said, ‘You shouldn't lead when you are dancing.'”71 She took her strengths as a researcher and applied them to the social situations that were challenges in her personal life.

Hatfield's dogged work ethic and faith in her abilities as a researcher guided her investigations into many areas of human behavior, including physical attraction.72 She continued to be very productive, publishing six articles and a book chapter in 1966 alone. Most of her work was co-authored with several other scholars such as fellow researchers in Minnesota's lab, including director Aronson. Topics included cognitive dissonance, persuasion, the fulfillment of expectations, along with her second article analyzing romantic behavior.73

70 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 2, 2012.
71 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 2, 2012.
73 *Time*, Minneapolis: Graduate School Research Center, University of Minnesota, University of Minnesota, 1966), 147-158. Elaine Hatfield, G. William Walster, D. Abrahams, & Z. Brown, “The Effect on Liking of Underrating or
“The Importance of Physical Attractiveness in Dating Behavior,” published in the *Journal of Personal and Social Psychology* in 1966, was groundbreaking. No one had conducted a field experiment on dating. The results were conclusive and would stand for decades: “The only important determinant of the subjects, liking for his date was the date's physical attractiveness.” The experiment demonstrated that dating behavior functioned in direct conflict with a leading psychological theory. Aspiration theory held that individuals aspire toward goals that they believe attainable and that these goals tend to be on par with their own status. If the theory held true for dating, attraction would have been only one of many factors influencing date selection. In practice, it was the only factor proven statistically significant.

Personality, intelligence, scholastic tests, and other measurements were assessed in the study. Each was evaluated in order to ascertain its influence upon date preference. It was assumed that people with particular traits would be more attracted to certain traits. For example, intelligent people should be more attracted to other intelligent people, and so on. Prior to the experiment, Hatfield also hypothesized that “One's realistic romantic choices will be affected by the same practical considerations that affect other realistic goal setting.” Surprisingly, test subjects' self assessments had no effect upon date choice.


The experiment concluded that personal and/or social forces were not statistically a factor during the initial stage of dating. The desirability of a date did not conform to the same decision-making process that social scientists had identified in other situations. Both men and women rated dates nearly exclusively based upon their physical attractiveness.75

From the University of Rochester to The University of Wisconsin

Despite her love of the research facilities at the University of Minnesota, personal reasons led Hatfield and Walster out of the state. In 1967, Walster completed his Ph.D. and needed a job. The University of Rochester offered them both jobs and promised Hatfield a new, large state-of-the-art laboratory for her research. Walster accepted a position in the mathematics department. Unfortunately, upon arrival they found there were no laboratories for Hatfield's work and it was obvious that it would be at least five years before the new buildings would be operational. “They said that it would be ready by the time I came, but they hadn't even gotten funding, so there were no lab facilities. Worse than that, Bill entered a department that was bitterly divided between the mathematicians and the statisticians and both sides were fighting for his swing vote on departmental issues.”76

Hired as an associate professor, Hatfield did not find out until after relocating to New York that her position at the University of Rochester was not tenured. She asked the psychology department chair what would be required for tenure and was told to obtain a job offer from another institution, then the university could offer her job security. A self-

76 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 2, 2012. And personal correspondence with Elaine Hatfield September 17, 2012.
motivated scholar, Hatfield applied the same effort to finding a new position and was offered a better job by the University of Wisconsin. She was offered a job in the sociology department since the psychology department did not yet hire women, and Walster was offered a job in the Educational Psychology Department.77

Without resentment, Hatfield conveyed genuine confusion regarding the expectations of the University of Rochester. When pressed about why she left, she replied, “You can't expect me to be loyal when you tell me to seek out other job offers.” There was a gap between her professional expectations and what Rochester offered. She did not consider that year as a professional loss. Hatfield continued her work with Berscheid on projects at the University of Minnesota.78

Hatfield and Walster moved to Wisconsin's capital during the summer of 1967. Hatfield fondly remembers Madison as a liberal college town featuring diverse art, music, and food. The year in New York did not slow Hatfield's professional output. She published four articles, three co-authored with Berscheid. Although none of these publications analyzed interpersonal attraction, “Effectiveness of Debriefing Following Deception Experiments” articulated important strategies for research on dating behavior. Romance is a difficult emotion to study. Thus, many of the experiments designed to study it sought artificially to produce the emotion in order to observe it. For certain questions, deception was a necessary research tool. Hatfield's first published study on dating in 1965, “The Effect of Self-Esteem on Romantic Liking,” called for an attractive male graduate student to ask female test subjects out on a date following a deliberate increase

77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
or decrease in self-esteem. “Effectiveness of Debriefing Following Deception Experiments,” explained how to utilize deception properly, which included great care when debriefing subjects, explaining that what they were told was a manipulation required by the experiment. The study concluded that test subjects negatively affected by a particular deceptive act were not more difficult to debrief. Once debriefed, subjects were able to recover from any negative impact of the emotional manipulations required by the study. For example, an individual especially concerned about his or her adequacy in social situations who was given false information regarding his or her social adequacy as part of an experiment could be as effectively debriefed as someone without the sensitivity.

The study reached an additional conclusion: immediate debriefing may not be entirely effective. For certain personality types, after a long delay, debriefing may also be ineffective. It was believed that the temporary emotional manipulation had become more permanent. Thus, several debriefing sessions may be required. The process of debriefing in general, Hatfield later commented, was vitally important to her as a researcher. From test subjects she learned what did not work in an experiment and also gained insights into how subjects interpreted simulations in a multitude of ways.

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81 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 2, 2012.
The publisher Addison-Wesley ran a series of condensed psychology textbooks intended to be accessible to the general public. When the author contracted to write *Interpersonal Attraction* failed to perform, Berscheid was asked if she could write such a book quickly. Berscheid and Hatfield had already conducted experiments in the field and so set to work immediately and within a few months were ready with a manuscript. Hatfield attributes the accomplishment to Berscheid's writing skills—“one of the best in Psychology”—and the fact that there was very little work done in the field, thus writing the book “went quite fast.”

A professional reviewer at the time noted the general lack of coherence in the field, stating the overall “disorganized state of interpersonal attraction as an area of research.” The reviewer criticized the book for its common use of the quantifying terms “probably” and “may” as well as its lack of broader conclusions. The reviewer also called for more of an integration into a broader theoretical orientation. The text and its criticisms largely reflected the state of relationship science. A handful of disparate experiments had been conducted but a comprehensive theoretical framework had not been established. *Interpersonal Attraction* was the first book to utilize experimental research in order to explain romantic attraction. Texts from as early as Plato's *Symposium* (4th century B.C.E.) to Theodor Reik's *A Psychologist Looks at Love* (1944) theorized about love, but experimental data had never been incorporated into a book-length analysis.

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82 Ibid.
Hatfield and Berscheid's groundbreaking work began by examining how the terms “attraction” and “liking” have been interpreted as linear predictors. It had been largely assumed that past behavior predicts future behavior, but romantic “attraction” and “liking” proved more complicated and not unidirectional variables. Romantic emotions allowed for the simultaneous existence of both “liking” and “disliking.” A subject may state and think that he or she does not like someone, however, his or her body language and other actions reveal otherwise. Along with presenting the current research, much of the text focused on how much of the scientific data about love did not fit into existing psychological theories. The book also served to establish Hatfield and Berscheid as the leading experts in the field.94

Publications in 1970: Cognitive Dissonance, Dating Behavior, and College Admissions

In 1970 Hatfield published three articles: one continued her research into cognitive dissonance, one explored romantic “liking,” and another addressed the topic of race and sex discrimination in college admissions. Building upon Festinger's work that hypothesized how regret could be minimized by a reduction in cognitive dissonance, Hatfield's first publication of the year focused upon a subject's regret at specific time intervals following a decision. In contrast to the theory of cognitive dissonance, the study found that there was a small increase in regret following decision making. It was

surprising to learn that regret fluctuated with time; however, the results were not statistically significant.\textsuperscript{85}

Hatfield's second publication of 1970 revisited the factors affecting date choice and was published in the \textit{Journal of Experimental Social Psychology}. “The Effect of Self-Esteem on Liking for Dates of Various Social Desirabilities” re-engaged date desirability. It sought to determine what factors were important in addition to physical attraction. However, it simply confirmed the finding of Hatfield's 1966 study. Physical desirability —attractiveness—was the only statistically significant factor.\textsuperscript{86}

In addition to continuing her work in cognitive dissonance and dating preferences, Hatfield also took on current social issues. She described the late 1960s and early 1970s as “an era in which people were concerned about segregation and discrimination against women. We decided we wanted to check and see how much discrimination there was.” With new job security and a growing and respectable curriculum vitae, Hatfield was confident that conducting such a study would not be too difficult. Unfortunately, some did not want the chauvinistic system of power questioned.\textsuperscript{87}

Hatfield said of her 1970s study, “We had a tiny grant, but somehow when the university got wind of the study, the president called us in and said we could not run the study because we would embarrass our sister institutions.” As concern over the project spread from the University of Wisconsin to the government, Hatfield received a letter from the National Science Foundation which stated that no grant funds were to be used


\textsuperscript{87} Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 28, 2012.
for the study. But Hatfield was not easily dissuaded. Expressing her dedicated work ethic and natural affability, Hatfield laughed and stated, “but of course we ran the study!”

The investigation of college discrimination required significant resources. Hatfield and her two associates proved their commitment to their research by each putting up $2,000 in order to cover the experiment's estimated $6,000 budget. The project was labor intensive. It required that hundreds of faux college applications be created and sent to two-hundred and forty randomly selected colleges and universities. If the study were to be successful, the admissions boards needed to evaluate the dummy applications without bias. All applications needed to be complete and appear authentic, which included transcripts, standard application fees, and postage. Hatfield commented that “we ran it assuming the university would never know.”

Hatfield and her associates were genuinely surprised by what they found. At the time of the study, they assumed that minorities and women faced significant discrimination. The study did find that whites males were slightly preferred over blacks and females, but for the most part, these results were not statistically significant. However, an unpredicted but statistically significant “sex by ability” discrimination was revealed. The study found that “males were markedly preferred over females at the low ability level, but this difference disappeared at the higher levels.” Moreover, “since there are more young people, both male and female, at the lowest of our ability levels, it is

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89 Ibid.
clear that overall, women are discriminated against in college admissions.” Only the most intelligent women did not face active discrimination during college admissions.

Considering the obstacles encountered with the university administration and government funding sources, controversy should have ensued. However, outside of its publication in the *The Sociology of Education*, the study produced no professional or public interest. When asked why, Hatfield responds, “I don't think anyone read it. It just disappeared.” When pressed as to why no one had read it, Hatfield replies, “I'm not a good publicist. In a way I don't want people to read my work. I just want to hide out in the library.” Although she would soon become involved in student issues, Hatfield preferred non-public roles.

**The University of Wisconsin at Madison: Social Activism**

Hatfield’s relocation to the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1967 forced her to the center of the student movement. She remembers her years at the University of Wisconsin as “a time of great social activism.” Madison had long been a center of liberal sentiment and held some of the earliest protests against the Vietnam War. With a population of 170,000, and situated between Lakes Mendota and Monona, Wisconsin's capital in the early 1970s was largely populated with descendants of Nordic migrants. White students accounted for over ninety-five percent of school enrollment.

Madison witnessed many clashes between students and police. State Street, the ten-block corridor linking the Capitol with the university, was the location of multiple

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90 Elaine Hatfield, Anne Cleary, and Margaret Clifford, “The Effect of Race and Sex on College Admissions,” *Sociology of Education*, 44, 237-244.
91 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 21, 2012.
protests and a few that became violent. Hatfield was open to and supportive of many of the progressive movements that encompassed everything from civil rights to the Communist Party, but she chose not to become actively involved in off-campus groups. Hatfield focused her attentions on research and working within the university apparatus to effect change. She did not see herself as an organizer or group leader and felt most comfortable allowing others to assume the roles that required heavy socializing.

Hatfield was administratively involved in progressive issues at the university. Rather than protest and participate in radical groups, she used her position to reform from within the university. She helped create the Women's Studies Department and fought for women athletes to have equal access to the university's sports facilities. Based upon their study of other Women's Studies Departments around the nation, she and colleague Jane Hardyck created a template that was used by the university in order to establish the new Women's Studies department. Hatfield was also appointed to the athletic committee where she helped facilitate the integration of the university’s gym facilities. Previously, men's athletics controlled the funding, equipment, fields, and courts.

Until the mid-1970s, there were many confrontations between student protestors and police. With a natural talent for maintaining peace, Hatfield recalled that, “When they needed professors to stand between the students throwing bottles and the police, they sent me out there.” In her early thirties, she was not that much older than many of the graduate students. Her presence helped ease the tensions between the young students and the older officers. Her father's role as a police officer provided her with a deeper
understanding of their plight: men who depended upon their job to support their families and therefore took their work seriously. 95

On August 24, 1970, the excitable mood in Madison permanently changed: Sterling Hall was bombed. Just a few months after the Kent State shootings, four young protesters detonated a cargo van with about 2,000 pounds of explosives next to the Army Mathematics Research Center (AMRC) of Sterling Hall. The bomb destroyed the first floor physics lab, killing one researcher and severely injuring another, but missed its target: the AMRC located on the second, third, and fourth floors. The AMRC was conducting mathematical research for the U.S. military and often served as the site of student protests against the war. Many students did not believe that the university should be involved with the military. The militant mood throughout Madison receded following the Sterling Hall bombing. 96 Hatfield recalls that the optimism and vibrance of the counter culture movements were immediately replaced with a somber mood. 97

Radical Research 1971-1974

Sexual Arousal and Heterosexual Perception

From her laboratory, Hatfield was involved in the social revolutions of the 1970s. Between 1971 and 1975, Hatfield published twenty-three articles, fourteen of which addressed gender conscious issues that ranged from body image to sexual arousal and dating behavior. She even followed up her study on discrimination in college admissions by including the impact of gender on job interviews and work evaluations. This was a highly productive period that contributed to Hatfield's reputation as “the most cited

95 Ibid.
97 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 21, 2012.
scholar” in the field of social psychology, an era of visibility which lasted from approximately 1970 through 1988.98 She continued to collaborate with a number of researchers on a wide variety of interpersonal relationship topics that also included physical attraction and equity theory.

One radical article, “Sexual Arousal and Heterosexual Perception,” was published by the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology in 1971 and investigated how sexual arousal impacts men's perceptions of women. Its results provided evidence that romantic situations often produced behavior that was counter-intuitive. Hatfield comments that “It was an interesting study and nicely designed. I especially liked how when men were really sexually aroused, they thought that a woman would want to go to bed with them, but they didn't like her because they thought she was a slut. They assumed that she was available.” But, like her other studies with the potential to ignite controversy, Hatfield recalled that so few people knew of her work outside of psychology, that it had zero impact on the public discourse.99

“Adrenaline Makes the Heart Grow Fonder”

Co-authored with Ellen Berscheid, “Adrenaline Makes the Heart Grow Fonder” was a lengthy article that appeared in the June 1971 issue of Psychology Today. The journal was geared towards an educated lay audience. It provided a synopsis of the current research and the authors' best understanding of how passionate love functioned. Heightened emotions, regardless of their cause, were usually a prerequisite for romance.

The article also discussed the broad social concerns of love research. Long assumed a taboo subject, it began, “For years, the subject of love has been ignored by psychological researchers.” The authors noted that including the words “love” and “sex” were enough to end a potential study. “Foundations and government agencies have been reluctant to grant funds... and psychologists themselves have considered experimenters on the topic of love to be 'soft-headed,' 'unscientific,' or possessed of a flair for the trivial.” \(^{100}\) Many scientists had shunned such research and undermined its credibility.

Berscheid and Hatfield cited their own research and drew from the work of others in the new field, crediting Masters and Johnson's 1966 bestseller, *Human Sexual Response* and *Human Sexual Inadequacy*, with establishing sexual research as legitimate. \(^{101}\) According to Hatfield and Berscheid, “In the last five years more psychologists have begun to study romantic love than in the entire history of the science.” Psychologists realized that it was possible and necessary to study the psychology of love. Contradictory aspects of romantic love were analyzed in their *Psychology Today* article. Paradoxically, heightened emotions of longing, pain, and jealousy were often associated with an increase in romantic emotions, rather than a decline. Dominant psychological wisdom held that “one can predict quite well how much a person will like another if one knows to what extent his companion rewards or punishes him.” However, romantic emotions do not always conform to this prediction and often flourish under opposite


\(^{101}\) Hatfield and Berscheid did not give this credit to the early work of Alfred C. Kinsey in the late 1940s and early 1950s.
conditions. They concluded: “Passion sometimes develops in conditions that would seem
more likely to provoke aggression and hatred than to permit love to flower.”

“Adrenaline Makes the Heart Grow Fonder” addressed these often contradictory
emotions and showed that while the emotion of love did not conform to existing models
and theories, it could be effectively studied. The article explained how an emotionally
intense state was often a prerequisite for a romantic experience, and that the origins of the
emotional arousal were not important. Drawing from an important 1962 laboratory study
in which participants were administered adrenalin they concluded that almost any sort of
intense physiological arousal can foster heightened emotions. The key point was how the
subject perceived his or her emotions. If the aroused state was thought to be caused by a
potential lover, then the subject interpreted the intense state as romantic love.

Berscheid and Hatfield hypothesized that American popular culture had a strong
influence on how individuals interpreted such states. “The American culture strongly
encourages individuals to interpret a wide range of confused feelings as love.” While
positive reinforcements can facilitate romantic love, the researchers believed that
Americans were predisposed from movies, television, and print media to interpret fear,
pain, and frustration as romantic experiences. Irrespective of the cause, intense physical
and emotional states contributed to romantic love.

Sex Discrimination at the Workplace

Published in The Journal of Experimental Education in 1972, “The Effect of Sex
on College Admission, Work Evaluation, and Job Interviews” continued the work of

103 Ibid.
“The Effect of Race and Sex on College Admissions,” published two years earlier. The study reprinted the results from the original college admissions experiment along with a follow-up experiment that examined sex discrimination in the working world. Among several questions, it sought to clarify an experience that was central to Hatfield's own professional experience: “Does the Ph.D. candidate have equal opportunity for employment regardless of sex?”

Acknowledging an overall contraction of the job market for Ph.D. holders, the researchers investigated the effect of sex on academic hiring practices. They filled out fake job applications at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Eight bogus applications were prepared that featured high and low ability applicants for both men and women. The results reinforced the previously observed sex by ability discrimination, in which women of lower abilities faced discrimination. However, quantity of their sample applications was too small for the results to be accepted as statistically significant. A much larger sample size of two-hundred and sixty-eight applicants—an impractically large number to fabricate for a short conference and hiring fair—would be required to obtain statistically significant results. Because the data trends aligned with other experiments, the authors concluded “that females of less than outstanding ability appear to be in need of vocational rehabilitation.” The average woman faced real barriers when applying for jobs.


105 Ibid.
The Affect of Physical Attraction on Dating Behavior

Between 1971 and 1975, Hatfield and her research partners conducted a series of experiments and published an article that sought to identify additional factors influencing date choice. The original 1966 study, “The Importance of Physical Attractiveness in Dating Behavior,” found that physical attractiveness was the only statistically significant factor affecting a date's desirability. However, because the subjects of the first experiment were all eighteen year-old college freshmen (a young group that did not know each other very well), there may have been other overlooked factors. Two experiments were devised in order to assess the effect of potential rejection on date selection. It was hypothesized that the possibility of rejection would influence date preference, for example, due to fear of rejection a subject would not select the most attractive date.106

Published in 1971, “Physical Attractiveness and Dating Choice: A Test of the Matching Hypothesis,” explained the results from two experiments. The first experiment found that rejection did not affect date selection; however, it revealed that women requested more intelligent, considerate, and outgoing dates than men. On the other hand, for males, physical attractiveness was slightly more important than for females. A more complex second experiment looked at the sex of the subject, his or her attractiveness as rated by a third party, and the attractiveness of their date choice. It found no statistically significant correlations among the three factors. However, more attractive subjects did tend to choose more attractive dates. Furthermore, among female subjects, the objective assessment of their attractiveness by a third party correlated directly with the frequency

with which they dated. More attractive women went on more dates over the last week, month, and year. Despite these trends, the two experiments were unable scientifically to identify other influential factors upon date selection beyond physical attractiveness.

**“Beauty and the Best”**

The March 1972 issue of *Psychology Today* featured Hatfield and Berscheid's article “Beauty and the Best.” With accessible language, the piece challenged the popular notion that it is what is on the inside that matters, arguing that “beauty has more impact than we suspected.” Most shocking was how attractiveness shapes a child's life. In a nursery-school setting, studies found that unattractive children were less liked and believed and were thought to cause more problems than their attractive peers. Hatfield and Berscheid argued that “physical attractiveness may become a major factor in the social development of the child.”

A wide variety of experiments were cited that confirmed these findings. In one study women were asked to assess a written report of a child's behavior that included a photo of the child. When the women judged bad behavior from an unattractive child, they were more harsh in their judgments than when the child was attractive. Some respondents went so far as to dismiss entirely unruly behavior by attractive students. The study also found evidence that “physical attractiveness may even influence which students make the honor roll.”

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In another study, teachers were asked to review and rate the files of fifth grade students. The student files were assembled in much the same way that the false college applications had been prepared in “The Effect of Race and Sex on College Admissions.” Photographs of alternatively attractive and unattractive children were attached to dummy files. The results confirmed the results of previous studies:

The teachers assumed that the attractive girl or boy had a higher I.Q., would go to college, and that his parents were more interested in his education. With the strong influence that teachers and elders play in children’s lives, it is most likely the case that students mold their behavior to conform to social expectations.

“Beauty and the Best” then addressed the impact of attractiveness upon opposite-sex dating. They revisited studies of college dating, and concluded that while other factors played a role, appearance was overwhelmingly most important. Additional research was cited which concluded that beautiful people were assumed to be “more sensitive, kind, interesting, strong, poised, modest, sociable, outgoing, and exciting than less attractive persons.”

Hatfield and Berscheid sought to apply these conclusions to daily life and asked whether attractiveness contributed to happiness. They knew from the work of others that attractive females dated more, had more sexual experiences, and were “in love” more often. They hypothesized that “A beautiful woman has a wider range of social activity and consequently has a better chance of meeting a man who has similar interests and values. It may well be,” they added, “that beautiful women are indeed sexually warmer... simply because of wider experience.” In order to test these assumptions, the team compiled data on women in their late forties and early fifties. There was a direct

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correlation between good looks in college and marital and occupational satisfaction later in life. But, the results were inverted. “The more attractive the woman had been in college, the less satisfied, the less happy, and the less well-adjusted she was twenty-five years later.” Drawing from the work of other, the authors hypothesized that the more attractive women might be less happy later in life because they were no longer as attractive. Their beauty, what had placed a significant positive influence in their lives, had diminished over time.110

The six-page article concluded by speculating about the influence of attractiveness on human behavior. First the authors believed that physical impressions matter, especially during a fast-paced life in which many interactions are brief. Additionally, the standards of beauty used in the study were admittedly homogenous in terms of race, and even lacked minor visible handicaps such as glasses. They had also excluded individuals with exceptional beauty. The researchers ventured that a fuller range of unattractive to very attractive would reveal even more dramatic results.

“The Body Image Report”

Inspired by “Beauty and the Best,” Psychology Today printed a follow-up survey a few months later. Hatfield, Berscheid, and George Bohnstedt created the one-hundred and nine question survey titled “Body Image.” Psychology Today printed the full questionnaire to see how their readers felt about the interaction between their personalities, their bodies, and other behaviors. The researchers sought to assess the relationship between the mind and the body in order to determine which exerted the greatest influence over human behavior. Noting how the bulk of current relationship

110 Ibid., 74.
research has been conducted upon a young and homogenous student population, the authors admitted to large knowledge gaps. The *Psychology Today* survey was designed to draw from a much larger and diverse audience. They asked for respondents’ ages and featured many questions that focused on how one's relationship with one's body changed at different periods of life, including youth, adolescence, adulthood, and into retirement.\(^{111}\)

An astounding 62,000 plus readers completed the survey. It took time, but *Psychology Today* published the results along with a lengthy review of the findings by the researchers over a year later. The sheer volume of respondents attested to the importance of the issue. Citing their results and those of others, Hatfield and her associates concluded that “we treat beautiful people differently from the way we treat homely ones, and denying this truth will not make a person's looks less important.”

Despite widespread acceptance that an individual’s intelligence, compassion, and character matter, the data and evidence proved that looks mattered most.\(^{112}\) The survey’s real purpose was to understand better people's relationships with their bodies and to reveal how bodies are important to shaping one’s attitude, self-esteem, and romantic relationships. It asked about satisfaction with twenty-five specific body parts and characteristics, and it found that a woman's body image consistently lagged behind that of a man’s. For example, four percent of men and seven percent of women were severely dissatisfied with their body image, and eleven percent of men and sixteen percent of women were “slightly” dissatisfied. Women's critical judgments of themselves

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\(^{112}\) Ibid., 131.
always exceeded men's. The survey also asked how respondents felt at different periods throughout their life and found that, overall, “women are generally less satisfied with their bodies than are men, and this difference does not dissipate with age.”

It was also discovered that childhood experiences had lasting effects on body image and self-esteem. “People who were teased as children and who felt homely are less satisfied with their bodies as adults.” They cited research that supported how others’ opinions of one’s abilities, emotional states, and attractiveness largely impacted a person. Thus, outward appearance strongly influenced success because of its influence upon self-esteem. The survey supported these conclusions and found strong correlations between body image and self-esteem for both sexes. However, self-esteem for each sex was founded on slightly different criterion. For men, attractiveness meant handsomeness and having a muscular chest, whereas for women it meant prettiness and having a slim physique.

The survey also revealed that individual body image impacted much more than one's self-esteem. Those with a positive body image were also more sexually satisfied. Men and women who liked their bodies “have had more sexual partners, have more sexual activity, and enjoy sex more than those with negative body images.” Undoubtedly, the beautiful had a head start in their youth in terms of self-esteem, dating, and friendships, but the survey found that beauty played a less important role in overall happiness as individuals aged. They concluded that “beautiful teen-agers are never less happy than their peers; they are simply no happier once they pass forty-five.”

113 Ibid., 120.
115 Ibid., 128.
The last third of the article focused on relationships and “equity theory,” which insists that, in intimate relations, a balanced exchange determines the stability and happiness of the relationship. “Market conditions insure that each individual gets a mate of roughly equal desirability.” Citing a number of studies, including the body image survey, the authors concluded that “people do tend to choose partners of their own level of attractiveness and desirability.” However, many factors could offset this equation but still lead to an equitable relationship. For example, the survey found that “the more attractive one's partner, the less money the partner earns, relative to oneself.” This was true of both men and women; the survey found that a wife who believes her husband to be more attractive generally makes more money than he, and vice-versa.\footnote{116}

The “Body Image” questionnaire revealed the strong role that physical attractiveness plays throughout life. Attractiveness not only provided an important head start, but could be a valuable commodity providing access to more friends and dating partners, significantly enough to offset income inequalities in permanent relationships. While it did not guarantee success or happiness—especially later in life—attractiveness was found to have the biggest impact on intimate relationships and sexual satisfaction.\footnote{117}

These finding exerted significant influence upon Hatfield’s work and perhaps impacted the eventual dissolution of her own marriage.\footnote{118} Disparate interests characterized her

\footnote{116} Ibid., 130-131. 
\footnote{117} Ibid., 122-123. 
marriage since its inception, and Walster’s many infidelities added further challenges. The adjective that she used repeatedly to describe Walster was “georgous,” and when asked why she had not left him, she responded, “I didn’t know how to date and I didn’t think that anyone wanted to date me.”

**1974: Another Productive Year**

In 1974, Hatfield published six research articles and contributed two book chapters in edited volumes. Her works addressed a wide variety of topics including a few controversial issues. Of the six research articles, one investigated movie preferences following a murder, another presented at a conference looked at the future of small group research, three were studies investigating equity theory, and one examined the harsh treatment of women by other women within academic administrations.

The book chapters addressing physical attractiveness and love were co-authored with Berscheid. Published in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, “Physical Attractiveness” stated that psychologists were reluctant to investigate the effects of physical attractiveness and seldom devoted considerable time to experiments that identify what was considered attractive. While beauty remained a subjective judgment, when a group of participants evaluated physical appearance, there was an overwhelming and statistically significant agreement about who was beautiful. Defining beauty was illusive, but recognizing it was not. Hatfield's previous work identified physical attractiveness as the single most influential variable upon dating behavior. In the chapter titled “Physical Attractiveness,” she argued that it should be considered an important variable in

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119 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, January 31, 2012.
assessing all types of social behavior. Because physical attractiveness played such a large role in one's personal and social development, Hatfield proposed including it as a variable in other studies.\textsuperscript{120}

Published in *Foundations of Interpersonal Attraction*, “A Little Bit about Love: A Minor Essay on a Major Topic,” Hatfield and Berscheid reviewed the available research on love. They addressed its various forms, from liking and loving to passionate love. Their chapter addressed how studies of romantic love often resulted in information that was contrary to other research, and how heightened emotions of any kind could be interpreted as romantic love. The chapter also discussed the role of culture in labeling love, explaining that children are taught at an early age how to interpret their emotions. Culture impacts how we interpret our emotions. They provide an example of a small male child who is found to be shy around young female companions. The parent’s relabel the child’s “shyness” as “liking,” and thereby condition the child to interpret their shy emotions as attraction. This example is just one of many that also include looking at the presentation of romance in popular culture and its influence upon interpreting emotions as attraction. The authors concluded that passionate love is a “complex and elusive phenomenon,” and that two components are necessary: first, a psychologically charged state in which the subject experiences heightened emotions, and second, the subject himself or herself must define this aroused state as love. Hatfield’s work supported the

two component model of romantic attraction, which held that any intense state could be interpreted by the participant as attraction.  

**Fleeced by Senator Proxmire**

1974 marked the last highly productive year for Hatfield until 1978. Responding to the Golden Fleece awarded in March 1975 consumed a great quantity of her time and limited her ability to conduct research experiments. Before she received the Golden Fleece Award, Hatfield believed that few people outside of the field of psychology read her work. She stated that it was not controversial simply because it was not widely known. No one questioned that equity theory applied to the workplace or philanthropic activities; however, at conferences and public talks, when she stated that it applied to marriages, audiences vehemently dissented. Many people were resistant to the idea that stable long-term relationships required a balanced reciprocity to function. It undermined the ideal of romantic love and suggested that a logical reciprocity was required for the stability of a romantic relationship.

When asked about the influence of Proxmire's attacks, Hatfield says, “The Golden Fleece motivated us to write *A New Look at Love*. We were trying to defend ourselves, sharing that there was good research.” Moreover, “we wanted people to read it, we didn't seek to write a scientific text.” Immediately following the Golden Fleece Award,

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122 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 28, 2012. Additional evidence suggests that the application of equity theory to relationships was controversial. Hatfield had worked on book-length treatment of equity theory since the early 1970s. For five years the publisher was unwilling to publish the completed manuscript. The publisher always had an excuse—either company related or personal problems—for why it was not ready to go to print, but in fact it was the subject matter that caused the holdup. Finally in 1978, *Equity Theory and Research* was published which included the work from many experiments dating back nearly a decade. Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 28, 2012. Elaine Hatfield, G. William Walster, and Ellen Berscheid, *Equity Theory and Research* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1978).

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Hatfield's public profile increased dramatically. She and Berscheid held a press conference and were interviewed on several local radio and television stations. However, the credited co-author of *A New Look at Love* would be Walster.

Forced into the media spotlight, Hatfield's career trajectory was forever changed. She transformed from a researcher focused on experiments to that of a scholar and public intellectual. Much of her time in the ensuing years was devoted to sharing her specialized knowledge of relationship science with a general audience. She worked on a book that would be directed toward a general audience, but that would feature the latest specialized knowledge produced by the social sciences. *A New Look at Love* (1978) contributed to the public discourse surrounding marriage, divorce, relationships, and love. Along with providing the most up-to-date research in an accessible format, it defined two distinct stages of love. First it coined the term “companionate love.” The term referred to feelings of intimacy and affection towards a person but not the passion or arousal associated with “passionate love.” Companionate love develops slowly in contrast to the wildly emotional state of passionate love that includes “tenderness and sexuality, elation and pain, anxiety and relief, altruism and jealousy.”

The text explained to a lay audience the science behind the often confusing and irrational aspects of romantic love. While the field of relationship science had only existed for about a decade and was not comprehensive, it did help to explain why we date certain people, the factors that maintain the balance within a relationship, and why the excited emotions of passion at the beginning of a relationship change over time. Hatfield

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explained how “...passion is a fragile essence. It provides joy, excitement, delirium, and fulfillment—along with anxiety, suffering, and despair—for a short time. Companionate love is a heartier flower. It can provide gentle friendship for life.”"\textsuperscript{124} Despite the dichotomy between passionate and companionate love, the common belief is that both emotions can exist simultaneously. Most want the passion that ignites a romance to co-exist with the constancy of a supportive love, however, research reveals that “passionate love is characterized by fragility.”\textsuperscript{125} With time, passionate feelings become more tranquil and the intense feeling at the beginning of a relationship tends to change.

Titled “How Long Does Love Last?” in chapter six Hatfield argues against the story-book ending endorsed by American popular culture. Several studies investigated this ideal shared by so many Americans. One examined relationships and found that among college students forty-four percent of the relationships had ended within two years.\textsuperscript{126} Another assessed passion as reported in marriage on a passionate love scale created by psychologists, finding that passion decreases with time. For example, among couples that stayed married (the divorce rate was approximately fifty percent, but not discussed in the study) in the first three years of marriage, passion in marriage scored an average ninety-eight points out of one hundred, whereas, after ten years of marriage the score dropped to eighty-four points.\textsuperscript{127} Just exactly how long does love last? According to

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 126.  
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 108.  
Hatfield, the heart-pounding feeling of being “in love” lasts on average between six and thirty months.128

Coining the term “companionate love” helped articulate this common yet often unsettling shift. It summed up the change in emotions experienced by lovers over time. The appearance of “companionate love” in A New Look at Love in 1978 represented the first presentation of the term to a public audience, and a July 1978 New York Times article included one of the first printed appearances of the term in a mass media venue.129 “Companionate love” provided an accessible term to describe the emotional shift that occurs in long-term relationships as intense sexual attraction transitions to warmer, more comfortable, and increasingly stable emotions. In a New York Times article, Hatfield states, “in the matter of companionate versus passionate love, for example, would it not be easier for people to reconcile themselves to the waning of passion (and perhaps stay out of divorce court) if they knew for sure that everyone else was in the same boat?130

Three years earlier, Senator Proxmire’s major criticism of her work was that the research did not address pressing social issues, such as divorce. In his personal response to James Reston's defense of “love” research, Proxmire argued that the research was neither practical nor necessary. Citing the grant proposal, he pointed out that neither “marriage” nor “divorce” were mentioned. Hatfield's career changed course in March 1975 in order to address these concerns and other concerns that will be fully outlined in

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the final two chapters. It required significant time and energy to refute Proxmire's assertions, but there was an even bigger challenge: the American public lacked a scientific understanding of romantic love. Hatfield's research was not yet part of the discussion and debate surrounding men’s and women's roles.

Following the receipt of Proxmire's first Golden Fleece Award, Hatfield began the long process of sharing her research and the corpus of relationship science with the public. In June 1975, she and Walster were featured in *People Magazine*. They provided specifics about their research and offered a window into their unconventional relationship. Details included how they sleep in separate bedrooms, that Walster refuses to travel with Hatfield, and how Walster would often take his dinner in bed when the couple hosted dinner parties. Despite a handful of other issues mentioned in the article, issues that would appear to make a stable and loving relationship difficult--including “incompatibility”--the *People* piece concludes with Hatfield’s statement: “We still have nothing in common but we’ve been happy for thirteen years.” While the quotes and pictures depicted a happy couple in spite of their many incompatibilities, in actuality, their marriage was in shambles.131 Walster had been seeing other women for the better part of a decade and they would be divorced within a few years.132 Hatfield’s research into equality theory, dating behavior, and other aspects of interpersonal attraction continued to be intertwined with her personal life.

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132 Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 28, 2012.
In 1978, following the publication of *A New Look at Love: A Revealing Report on the Most Elusive of All Emotions*, in 1978 Hatfield embarked on a summer-long national television tour, each day visiting a different city to participate on talk shows. The personal and the professional were intertwined for Hatfield, and the Golden Fleece Award drew her into public and political spheres. Her public profile increased dramatically as she combated Proxmire’s charges, publically shared research from her field, and entered the national debate about funding for scientific research. In the ensuing decades, Hatfield has been featured innumerable times in newspapers and magazines across the nation, quoted as an expert on love,\(^\text{133}\) while professionally maintaining a stellar reputation as one of the most cited social psychologists.\(^\text{134}\) In 2012, she was honored with the William James Fellow Award for lifetime achievement by the Association for Psychological Science.\(^\text{135}\)

Hatfield received the William James Fellow Award because of her significant contributions to psychology. With her studies of interpersonal attraction that began in the mid-1960s she legitimized and popularized the field by establishing theories and methods for evaluating love and romantic attraction. Study after study confirmed several conclusions that formed the fundamentals of the new sub-field. First, that physical attraction was the only significant variable affecting date selection, second, that physical appearance significantly impacts many aspects of life, and third, that two components are


\(^{135}\) “Awards and Honors” www.psychologicalscience.org.
necessary for a romantic experience: a heightened emotional state and interpreting the state as love. Social psychology seeks to answer relevant contemporary questions with the most up to date research methods. For these reasons, questions and tools of analysis are always changing.

In general, the field has not developed in a linear fashion. Sub-fields are continuously developing, some lasting for decades and influencing generations of research. The foundations that Hatfield helped to establish remain important in the sub-field of interpersonal attraction, but new research technology make Hatfield’s methods seem antiquated. Rather than focusing on personal responses to questionnaires and sifting through data in order to find statistically significant results, brain scan technology has opened new windows into understanding human emotions. Beginning in the 1980s, the development of brain scan technologies such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) allowed the fields of neuroscience and psychology to overlap. The ability to watch brain activity in real time developed quickly. Researchers now can map out brain activity in response to almost any stimulation. Recent research of brain imaging shows that within the brain there are two components to pain, sensory and emotional. The brain registers the physical pain in one location and how distressing the pain is--the emotional component--in another location. Thus, social pain and physical pain have a lot in common. Scientists continue to discover new and important details about love and from fMRIs have concluded that the brain processes the emotions of a broken heart in the same

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way that it processes withdrawal from a drug addiction. This research helps explain why break-ups are such painful experiences.\textsuperscript{137}

The following chapter offers a close readings of the \textit{Los Angeles Times} and \textit{The New York Times} in an effort to present a handful of numerous public debates between men and women, and will examine the cultural values that informed news coverage. The personal, professional, and political were contentious and intertwined throughout the 1970s. These debates provide important context for a close reading of the newspapers’ coverage of the First Golden Fleece Award. This coverage was not extensive, but it certainly revealed how the participants’ personal and professional lives became entangled into political debates. Proxmire attacked Hatfield and Berscheid’s work because he thought it was a waste of taxpayers’ money, but because of the focus of their research, the words that he chose to attack with, and the problems in his personal life, the public debate quickly assumed the predominant tone of a debate between men and women over their changing rights, roles, and responsibilities.

Chapter 4

Negotiating Gender: Men and Women’s Issues in *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times*

Ah, Sweet Mystery! Scientific Love Study Turns Proxmire Off
--Robert Barkdoll, front page of the *Los Angeles Times*, March 12, 1975

What was romantic love anyway—a basis for secure family and national life, or a dangerous illusion?

Issues between men and women were a driving theme in the printed news coverage of the mid-1970s, and interpreting these issues through a gender binary often reinforced stereotypes of men and women and their roles in society. This chapter reviews the newspaper coverage of the first Golden Fleece Award in March 1975, as published in *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, and provides a review of the news and editorial content surrounding the debate. The bulk of this chapter establishes the preoccupation that Americans had with love and sex. It was within this atmosphere of sexual topics and innuendo that Hatfield accepted the responsibility of defending her work to the public. The final sections of the review of newspaper coverage in this chapter will address the impact that American obsessions with men and women’s roles, relationships, and responsibilities had upon the printed coverage of the first Golden Fleece Award.

*The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* were chosen because they provided continuous coverage of debates between men and women, which most often focused on love and sex.¹ This chapter begins with a brief overview of *The New York*

¹ For a detailed reading of a conservative paper, see the daily coverage of the *Chicago Tribune* surrounding the first Golden Fleece Award as covered in chapter five.
*Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, including a short history, their format, and general publication information. An analysis of both daily newspapers’ coverage of men and women’s issues in the first half of 1975 follows. Methods include examining the indexing process along with an overview of related content. It becomes clear that the initial coverage of the Golden Fleece Award and the printed press debate that followed was just one aspect of the ongoing cultural and political debates involving the professional roles of men and women, the private relationships between the sexes, the laws affecting family life, and the ability of the government to manage public funds responsibly.2

**Background: *Los Angeles Times* and *The New York Times***

Since 1881, the primary focus of *Los Angeles Times* (*L.A. Times*), up until the postwar period, was highlighting the virtues of Los Angeles in order to promote the city’s growth. It was not until family ownership reached its fourth generation with Otis Chandler in 1960 that the paper was recast as a national news outlet. With a focus on reporters and the news room, national and international reporting expanded and the paper

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2 Other papers with a national circulation and a more conservative reputation, such as *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*, are not included because they provided very little coverage of women’s issues. The *Post* and *Journal* either failed to provide coverage of the issues among men and women, or their coverage was thin and dismissive of such topics. For example, on March 12, 1975, *The Washington Post*’s short article on page A4 outlined Proxmire’s First Golden Fleece Award and provided a few defensive comments by Dr. Berscheid. Its front page that day was dominated entirely by war and politics. The paper’s eleven front page articles on March 12 were either written by staff writers or produced by its foreign bureaus. Three of the eleven articles covered domestic news, either government corruption, gasoline issues, or a combination of both. The same pattern held true for the paper’s editorial content, exclusively focused on politics and war that day, and seldom addressed the ongoing cultural debates that surrounded changes among men and women’s relationships. (A survey of the editorial content throughout March 1975 reveals that approximately one editorial per week addressed the on going cultural debates surrounding race and gender. For the week of March 11, 1975 see “A Model of Affirmative Action?” *The Washington Post*, March 17, 1975, Sec. A, 23.) In the week following March 12, the *Post* printed two short follow-up pieces on the First Golden Fleece Award. The brief commentary, “How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Ways,” by staff columnist Judith Martin was printed on March 16. Martin was very critical of the research, considered it a waste of money, and responded to the Berscheid’s comments about Proxmire’s divorce and separation that were also quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* with, “Nobody is as good as psychologists at fighting dirty.” On March 19, the short seven line article, “Another Study on Love,” appeared on page two of section B. Several lines from Proxmire’s original press release were re-printed. Although it is unknown whether they received any, the paper did not publish letters to the editor regarding “love” research. However, like other papers, the *Post* provided regular coverage of Proxmire, totaling fifty-nine articles throughout 1975. ("Newspaper Index: The Washington Post 1975," Wooster Ohio: Bell & Howell Co., 1976.)
offered syndicated articles. Despite significant competition, the *L.A. Times* has remained the leading newspaper in terms of circulation in the Los Angeles metropolitan area.\(^3\) In 1975, it was the second largest circulation newspaper in the United States, printing 1,005,442 daily copies, and distributing 1,190,515 Sunday editions.\(^4\)

Founded in 1851 and first published as a local paper called the *New-York Daily Times*, *The New York Times* (*The N.Y. Times*) achieved international scope, circulation, and reputation as early as 1900.\(^5\) In 1975, it was the third largest American newspaper in circulation, printing 843,267 copies on weekdays, 694,626 copies on Saturday, and 1,419,329 copies on Sunday.\(^6\) The 1975 Sunday editions were behemoths, approximately 300 pages, plus inserted advertisements, along with the sixty plus page *New York Times Magazine*. The paper provided ten daily sections, including “News,” “Arts & Leisure,” and the “Fashion” section, which was actually the second-half of “Sports.”

**Reporting and Indexing Men and Women’s Issues in 1975**

Daily coverage of men and women’s issues revealed how American newspapers grappled with change as the definition of “women’s issues” was expanding from the domestic sphere to include wage, educational, medical, and legal rights. Some papers, such as *The Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*, largely ignored these issues while *The N.Y. Times* and *L.A. Times* provided continual front page and editorial

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coverage. The term *domestic*, once limited to the home and women, became more complicated as physical and emotional concerns were linked to the political sphere. Relationships were impacted by large-scale economic shifts and simultaneously affected large-scale social changes. Thus, interpersonal issues, such as "love" and "romance," along with public issues impacting the lives of men and women, such as legislation, legal rulings, public events, and economic hardships were all considered newsworthy by many daily newspapers.

This chapter will focus on two types of newspaper articles: those covering men and women’s issues that were indexed, and those that were not. By examining additional articles relating to these changes that were not indexed, we can reveal how the significance of issues pertaining to men and women was negotiated daily. In addition, the indexes of *The N.Y. Times* and the *L.A. Times* prove an unreliable method for evaluating any type of coverage because they are incomplete. A detailed examination of both papers on a daily basis and in a variety of subjects is necessary in order to thoroughly assess coverage.

Although much of *The New York Times’* content centered upon politics, war, business, and other “hard” new items, it continually featured men and women’s issues on the front page in addition to offering a regular forum for women in section V under the small sub-section “Women.” This daily section often featured articles dealing with child welfare, food safety and preparation, in addition to announcements for educational classes and discussion groups. More space for what were considered women’s issues at the time was provided each week in Sunday’s lengthy “HOME” section. A separate
insert, it was specifically directed at domesticity, featuring articles on fashion, interior design, cooking, pets, and plants. The news content of the “HOME” section was often subordinate to advertising for consumables such as lingerie and other clothing and accessories, housewares, and foodstuffs.\(^7\)

According to the index, daily coverage of men and women’s issues in the *Los Angeles Times* was significantly less than in *The N.Y. Times*. However, for the *L.A. Times*, the index chronicled few of the men and women’s issues and concerns that populated the paper’s print space. Despite the fact that the two papers held similar daily circulation rates—around one million—and printed papers of comparable length, the overall annual index for the *L.A. Times* was approximately one-third to one-quarter the size of that of *The N.Y. Times*.\(^8\) The *L.A. Times* index was a single thin volume for 1975, whereas *The N.Y. Times* was contained in two much thicker volumes.\(^9\)

A closer look at March 1975 reveals that many of the articles and editorials featuring the issues between men and women in the *L.A. Times* were indexed. There were, however, many more that were not. As cataloged in the *L.A. Times*’ index there were twenty-eight articles categorized under “Women,” six under “Abortion,” five under “Sexism,” four each under “Children & Youth” and “Rape,” three each under “Prostitution” and “Women’s Rights Movement,” two under “Birth Control,” one each


\(^9\) For a specific example see, “Chicago Profs Flunk Prox on Love, Bears,” September 7, 1975, *L.A. Times*, Sec. 7, 1. This article was not listed in the *L.A. Times* annual index. However, the indexes logged articles differently. The *L.A. Times* logged each article as a single line that included the proper noun or issues that was involved followed by date of publication, section, and page. *The N.Y. Times* also listed articles by topic or proper noun but also provided a brief description of select articles, then listed the date, section, and page for all similar articles throughout the year only separated by commas. This took up less room than placing each on a single line, however, the brief descriptions took up more room. *The N.Y. Times* indexing system was more complete.
under “Divorce” and “Family,” and zero under “Marriage.” Totaling fifty-seven, these articles represented a fraction of all articles covering men and women’s issues in March 1975. The vast majority of the articles that were located in the lengthy “HOME” insert or in the “VIEW’s” “Women” sub-section were not included in the index. On the whole, one can easily conclude that majority of the print space devoted to men and women’s issues throughout 1975 was not indexed by the L.A. Times.

In practice, the L.A. Times provided women with coverage comparable to that of the economy at a time when unemployment hovered at historically high levels, the value of the dollar in global markets had declined, and many municipalities within America faced bankruptcy. It is important to remember that the index provided a limited perspective, one that reflected what was considered “news” at the time and was not comprehensive. While not every article addressing men and women’s issues were cataloged in the index, approximately two articles per day that were indexed reflected the paper’s dedication to addressing the debates between men and women and providing a voice to women. Of many salient mid-1970s issues, few were more pressing than those pertaining to changing gender roles, rights, and responsibilities. For perspective, during the same time period that fifty-seven articles were indexed under “Women” or the titles that addresses conflicts between men and women mentioned above, there were exactly fifty articles indexed as “Economic.”

It would appear that men and women’s issues were on par with economic concerns, at least in terms of newspaper articles, however, such a methodology is not reliable due to inconsistent indexing. One possible explanation for this is that definitions
of existing terms were changing and new terms were created in order to accurately
dress the cultural transformations throughout the 1970s. As the roles of men and
women were renegotiated, so too were the terms used to describe these changes. As
mentioned previously, words and phrases like “battery,” “Ms,” and “sexual harassment”
entered the popular discourse. The significance placed upon these and many other words,
along with their status as newsworthy, was evolving. What was considered newsworthy
shifted during the 1970s. As minorities and women gained legal protections and access to
jobs, education, and other resources, news also became more inclusive, no longer
exclusively focused upon the traditional male world of politics, finance, and war.

Politics, war, business, and the economy were historically important issues, but
the women’s movement expanded the discourse to include men and women’s issues as
integral to and not distinct from the male dominated world. The popularity of the phrase,
“the personal is political,” reflected a growing consciousness among men and women that
issues between men and women were politically, economically, as well as socially
relevant.\textsuperscript{10} The problems that women faced were increasingly understood as aspects of
larger institutional and cultural problems that required redress through political,
economic, and military channels most often controlled by men. Historian Winifred D.
Wandersee explains:

The slogan “the personal is political” could well describe the whole decade of the
seventies as much as the women’s movement itself. Issues that were previously
ignored or evaded—including sexual relations, sexual harassment on the job,
child abuse, incest, wife battering, rape, and pornography—became public policy

\textsuperscript{10} For the evolution of this term see: Sara Evans, \textit{Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in
issues of the 1970s and 1980s, primarily because of the activism of women’s groups.\textsuperscript{11}

Whether or not this shift was exclusively the result of women’s activism can be debated, but what is clear is that during the 1970s concerns about men and women’s changing roles, rights, and responsibilities took center stage.

The public debate involving men and women’s issues in politics and law established such content as newsworthy. However, there were many more battles involving men and women’s issues that were personal. The public and private roles of men and women, including their interpersonal relationships were also a source of ongoing debates. Many of these disputes fell into an ambiguous space as they were not considered “hard news” of legal battles, but neither were they dismissible as tabloid gossip. As women’s legal, educational, and economic rights expanded, the news value of these topics also grew. A closer look at the articles covering men and women’s issues that were indexed, and a survey of the articles that were not indexed, reveals how the growing public and private agency of women was simultaneously addressed and overlooked by the \textit{L.A. Times} and \textit{The New York Times} in the mid-1970s. Men and women’s issues were newsworthy, but their importance was debated as seen by the amount of print space devoted to them, the style in which they were presented, their location on the page, and the size and type of pictures used. All of these factors also impacted the coverage of the first Golden Fleece Award.

Assessing the Printed Coverage of The Los Angeles Times

The importance of a particular news item is expressed through several modes within a paper. These include where the article is located, its length, the font size of its headline, the use of photographs, and how it is indexed and thus remembered. Section one of the March 1, 1975 edition of the Los Angeles Times ran the un-indexed article, “Mandated Term for Rapes to Be Sought.” The article’s length and size of its headline were both average and no pictures were provided. It covered legislation that prescribed sentences for second rape convictions in California, along with substantive revisions to the current law. These changes included altering the instructions presented to the jurors of rape trials, better training for hospital personnel dealing with rape victims, and free testing for pregnancy and venereal disease following a rape. Other provisions of the new law provided specialized police-officer training and physical-education classes in self-defense for women in secondary schools. The new law was designed to help curb rape by addressing it from various angles such as prevention, victim protection and care, and legal enforcement.\(^{12}\) As a crime, rape was now being handled differently under California law.

The same day, the front page of the “Sports” section featured an un-indexed short five-line article explaining how the Secretary for Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) signed Title IX legislation. The piece, “HEW APPROVED EQUAL RIGHTS REGULATIONS,” covered how colleges and universities would be required as early as the following school year to give equal opportunity to women in athletics or risk losing

all federal funding.\textsuperscript{13} This was the result of recent court rulings on Title IX Amendment of the Higher Education Act passed by Congress in mid-1972. Representative Patsy Mink (Democrat, Hawaii), who served twelve two-year terms in the U.S. House of Representatives originally wrote the legislation in order to prohibit discrimination based on gender by federally funded institutions. The legislation grew from her personal experiences with discrimination while a university student.\textsuperscript{14}

The bottom right-hand corner of the “Sports” section displayed a photo of the women’s indoor high-jump record holder, Joni Huntley, completing a six foot and one-half-inch backward flop to clinch the national indoor track title.\textsuperscript{15} The photo was approximately one-third the size of the feature photo of men’s college basketball that covered nearly half of the front page above the fold.\textsuperscript{16} The photo of the female high-jump champion was accompanied an article titled, “Larrieu Waltzes to Slowdown Win in AAU Protest,” which described how the female runner won the national title for the mile race. Francie Larrieu choose to run in the second lane, thereby handicapping herself, in protest of the AAU’s decision to deny her a chance to compete in the finals of the two-mile race. The short article mentioned few details and was provided a fraction of the print space devoted to the lead story on men’s basketball that covered approximately one-third of the entire front page of the “Sports” section. However, women’s sports received daily coverage and had been increasing following the passage of Title IX three years earlier.

\textsuperscript{13} AP, “HEW APPROVES EQUAL RIGHTS REGULATIONS,” \textit{L.A. Times}, March 1, 1975, Sec. 3, 1.
\textsuperscript{15} AP photo of Joni Huntley of Oregon winning the National AAU indoor track championships. \textit{L.A. Times}, March 1, 1975, Sec. 3, 1 “Larrieu Waltzes to Slowdown Win in AAU Protest,” \textit{L.A. Times}, March 1, 1975, Sec. 3, 1.z
Yet, equal coverage of women athletes remained elusive. For unknown reasons, the
article was not indexed as “track” or “sports,” but in the category of “proper noun,” under
the article’s subject, “Larrieu, Francie.”  

The discrepancy between men’s and women’s sports coverage was not
overlooked by the readers of the L.A. Times. “Viewpoint” a sub-section of the “Sports”
section, included related editorial comment and readers’ letters. March 1, 1975 letters to
the editor included, “Proportional Coverage of Women Urged,” whose female author
charged that the L.A. Times did not provide sufficient coverage of women’s athletics. She
argued how women were underrepresented by photos on the sports pages. The female
author stated, “I have been reading your sports section of sixteen to eighteen pages for a
month and have been amazed to find an average of only one or two articles each day
about women’s sports, and fewer photographs than articles.” The reader’s informal study
conveys the secondary status of women within the sports section. The author goes on to
state that “Women are fifty-one percent of the population, and many would like a section
which at least gives adequate coverage to women’s sports.”  

Although they comprised
slightly more than half of the nation’s population, it was obvious to any reader that
women represented only a small fraction of the sports coverage.

Without conducting a more comprehensive study of the L.A. Times, it is difficult
to evaluate the specific disproportion of men’s and women’s sports coverage. There are
studies of newspapers from the 1970s that reveal a large and visible disparity between
men and women’s coverage. One study examined eight newspapers—four midwestern

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17 Similarly, The featured UCLA basketball article was not indexed under “basketball,” nor under the
game’s star, “Trgovich, Pete.” It was not common to index articles that covered the results of specific
sporting events.

metropolitan papers, and two West Coast and two East Coast papers—and found that seven of the eight papers presented articles featuring men’s sports anywhere from twice as often to almost five times as often as articles featuring women’s sports. Such discrepancies were not limited to the sports pages. Women’s issues, defined as such at the time, were seldom the featured article of any section within a newspaper.¹⁹

Yet, the *L.A. Times* and many other papers provided regular forums for women’s concerns. Buried deep within the approximately 400 pages of the Sunday edition, and placed a dozen pages within section X’s “VIEW,” readers could find the “ABOUT WOMEN” sub-section. The “VIEW” had long been aimed at a female audience and focused on Los Angeles culture and society. By the 1970s it broke with the traditional food, family, and fashion format and addressed more progressive topics. However, it continued to cater to women, was supported by advertising geared toward household consumables, and featured social announcements. Its content evolved by the mid-1970s to showcase larger social issues, such as drug rehabilitation, runaway youth, and birth control.²⁰

The “ABOUT WOMEN” sub-section provided coverage of women. A close analysis of the Sunday March 2, 1975 issue provides a representative example of the sections’ format and commonly addressed issues. To begin, “ABOUT WOMEN” was placed on a page in which ninety-five percent of the print space was devoted to a Robinson’s department store advertisement featuring shoes. This was the normal layout

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for the section throughout 1975. Only a thin strip at the top was dedicated to four short articles, almost vignette in length, that addressed women’s issues. The first, “‘Amazing’ Inequalities,” covered a California legislative inquiry into the challenges women face when seeking to enter the labor force. Its findings included age and sex discrimination, lack of job training, and inadequate coverage provided to women by unemployment, worker’s compensation, and pension plans. The committee chairman stated that the discrimination against women is “amazing” and that, “fifty-four percent of all working women are low-paid clerical or service workers, and there are approximately 156,000 persons living below poverty level in female-headed California households.”

The second “ABOUT WOMEN” piece on March 2, announced that five generations of women would be present at a young girl’s birthday party. The third piece presented a discussion by a fitness expert regarding the quick transition to physical fitness that can be made by older women, and the fourth, “Woman’s Evolution,” briefly covered a recent text that explored how women are not biologically destined to inferiority, but “to elevate humankind out of the animal world to the social world.” The book’s author states that women’s role in giving life, providing food, and developing cooperation are what led to civilization, not early man’s aggressive, competitive nature. Although relegated to a small strip in section five, these four short pieces combined with the previously reviewed articles from other sections, reveal a paper that engaged with women’s issues, albeit tenuously. The L.A. Times was uncertain of how articles covering women should be indexed and did not provide them equal print space.

21 “‘Amazing’ Inequalities,” L.A. Times, March 2, 1975, Sec. V, 5. All articles were in “ABOUT WOMEN” Sub-Section and most were not titled.
22 Ibid.
Additional announcements of women’s activities in the Sunday March 2, edition were located under another sub-section titled “DATEBOOK.” Located in section eleven, “DATEBOOK” was a geographically specific section, one published for each of seven major regions within Los Angeles County. The staff and editor of these unique sections operated independently of the paper’s daily news editor. The editors of these sections reported to an associate editor, rather than the general managing editor. Thus, the content of “DATEBOOK” catered to a smaller demographic and provided insight into the issues and events taking place locally. Some of the general geographical areas represented by Section XI were “The West Side,” covering Beverly Hills, Brentwood, and Santa Monica, “San Gabriel Valley,” one of southern California’s principal valleys stretching east towards the Inland Empire, “San Fernando Valley,” covering more than half of the city of Los Angeles’ land area and including the cities of Burbank, Glendale, San Fernando, and the largely suburban “Orange County,” most famous for its tourism at such attractions as Disneyland and encompassing more than forty miles of coastline. The “DATEBOOK” sections are also significant because they highlight the enormous resources available to the paper. In 1975, the L.A. Times was a publishing powerhouse with national and international bureaus, producing the vast majority of its own articles, and counted an editorial staff of more than 550 people.23

A closer look at the “The West Side” from Sunday, March 2 reveals significant content directed at women, such as where they could meet other women for activities, discussions, and important events. It included detailed announcements for life-planning

23 Hart, The Information Empire, 331.
advice sessions, health food discussions, and an upcoming nursing convention. There were also two short articles covering planned women’s club events, along with two longer articles addressing the distribution of grants by a woman’s club and a seminar on being a peace officer’s wife. In addition, an eleven paragraph article on page nine of “The West Side,” looked at the numerous themes used to inspire fashion shows hosted by the area’s women’s clubs.

The “DATEBOOK” section announced the social events and themes that were central to many women’s lives. While not front-page, bold-font pieces, or archived as important by the paper’s official index, these articles and announcements reveal a newspaper committed to the events and concerns of smaller communities. The focus of the “DATEBOOK” sections was on the daily lives of the people. Addressing local issues in-turn showcased the meetings, activities, and work of women. But again, none of the articles and announcements previously mentioned were included in the newspaper’s index.

Beyond the “DATEBOOK” section, the articles and announcements covering women were commonly presented in the depths of the paper, printed in small spaces, provided diminutive bylines in relation to front-page and featured news, and not indexed.

28 Electronic archives scan articles along with their titles and dates individually, so thereafter each article exists in an information vacuum. The surrounding articles, the advertisements, and even the placement on the page is often lost. The information is much easier to access, but the context disappears.
For example, of the nearly two-dozen articles and announcements covering women on Sunday, March 2, 1975, only the article covering the support of Title IX by the Secretary for Health, Education, and Welfare was indexed. Only when a high-level governmental official was involved with an issue concerning “women” was it then appropriate to include it in index. The practice of utilizing a newspaper’s index to find content has become less common in the past several years with digitization of archives and electronic searches. However, these new methods hide much of the rich historic context that can inform scholarly investigation. In addition to missing what at that time was worthy of indexing, they also miss the broader context provided by surrounding articles that included content, placement on the page, the proportion of space devoted, along with the font size in relation to other headlines. The important context for the “ABOUT WOMEN” sub-section mentioned earlier, in which ninety-five percent of the page was covered by a Robinson’s department store advertisement, is entirely lost in the digital archives of The New York Times. Most digital archives do not include advertisements.

**Women’s Issues and the Changing Coverage of The New York Times**

In 1975, coverage of men and women’s issues by The N.Y. Times was more comprehensive and inclusive than the L.A. Times. Most articles covering these topics were indexed in The N.Y. Times. The paper repeatedly covered a wide variety of issues central to the renegotiation of men and women’s roles, rights, and responsibilities. Child care and parenting were regular topics. Another popular topic was the perceived association between the breakdown of the traditional family unit with the increased acceptance of homosexuality, single parents, the impact of poverty on parenthood, as
well as continuous legal and cultural battles over anti-discrimination laws. Family life was changing in the United States and *The N.Y. Times* regularly addressed this from a variety of perspectives.

A large portion of *The N.Y. Times* coverage throughout March 1975 was devoted to men and women’s issues and, although its index was more comprehensive than the *L.A. Times*, a significant portion of that coverage was not indexed. As cataloged during March, there were nine articles organized under “Women,” thirty-two for “Women’s Rights Movement,” twenty-six for “Abortion,” twelve under “Children & Youth,” nine under “Divorce,” seven under “Marriage,” six each under “Birth Control,” “Rape,” and “Family,” and one under “Prostitution.” These one hundred and thirteen articles were nearly double the fifty-seven articles indexed under the same titles by the *L.A. Times* in March. Like its West Coast counterpart, *The N.Y. Times* indexed articles were but a small fraction of the many pieces, daily announcements, and articles often buried deep in the front section, located in the “Family, Food, Fashions, Furnishings” section or in *The New York Times Magazine* which appeared on Sundays. Still, on average there were more than 3.6 indexed articles per day covering issues important to and related to the ongoing negotiations between men and women.

For comparison, even though the economy was central to the concerns of most Americans in the mid-1970s as the country was in the midst of a recession, there were

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29 “Women’s Rights Movement” was a sub-category of “Women.”
30 This high number for abortion related entries was largely due to the February 15 conviction of Dr. Kenneth Edelin for manslaughter of male fetus following a second trimester abortion performed at Boston City Hospital on October 3, 1973. Significant public debate ensued.
31 Categorized as “Sex Crimes” in *The N.Y. Times* index and “Rape” in the *L.A. Times* index.
32 Three additional articles covering the murder of prostitutes.
only forty-seven articles indexed under “Economic” issues for March.\textsuperscript{33} It appears that men and women’s issues received more than double the coverage according to the index, but as seen with the \textit{L.A. Times}, such indicators can be misleading as many economic issues were also not indexed. The remainder of this section will demonstrates how \textit{The N.Y. Times} coverage of women’s issues was more comprehensive than the \textit{L.A. Times} and how the paper’s indexing was also more complete. It was James Reston, the respected columnist for \textit{The N.Y. Times}, who provided the longest and perhaps most visible defense of Hatfield and Berscheid’s research. However, indexing for both papers was imperfect revealing cultural, legal, and political transformations, along with the logistical problem of keeping track of hundreds of articles each day.

The eleven articles featured on the front page of \textit{The N.Y. Times} on March 1, 1975 provide a representative snapshot of the major issues affecting the nation in the mid-1970s. Of the eleven featured articles, four addressed the economy, two related to the Vietnam War, and one covered the murder and rape of a minor.\textsuperscript{34} Three of the four remaining front page articles addressed international issues: the murder of an American consul in Argentina, twenty-nine deaths in a London subway crash, and an international monetary pact. The final front page article announced that following a large fire several weeks would be required before phone service could be restored to several hundred thousand customers in New York City.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{33} “Economic Conditions and Trends” was the specific title of \textit{The N.Y. Times} index.

\textsuperscript{34} The sex crime was indexed under “Prostitution—Murders” and of the four articles that engaged economic issues, only “Ford Opens Way for Compromises on Economy Plan,” was explicitly titled as economic, while the other three, “Experts Skeptical on Ford’s Energy Plan,” “Bankers Meet on a Plan to Aid Insolvent U.D.C.,” and “Prices that Farmers Get For Products Decline 4%” all revolve around economic issues but were not indexed as such.

These articles reveal many of the major domestic concerns. On this front page, four articles focused on economic concerns and two upon men and women’s issues. Of the two covering women (one showed the women and children victims of the war), only one was indexed under a category related to men and women such as “Abortion,” “Sexism,” “Children & Youth,” “Rape,” “Prostitution,” “Women’s Rights Movement,” “Birth Control,” “Divorce,” “Family,” and “Marriage.” Of the four economic articles, none were indexed under “Economic.” Utilizing the annual index for any purpose beyond an initial and rudimentary search is problematic.\(^\text{36}\) Like the process of investigating the \textit{L.A. Times}, an in-depth daily review of the paper is necessary.

The murder and rape article provided a heart-wrenching story that addressed love, economic hardships, and other factors contributing to the disintegration of families. It covered a fifteen year-old girl who, after running away from home and becoming a prostitute, was subsequently murdered in a hotel room.\(^\text{37}\) The article addressed the widespread problem of runaway youths—a symptom of both family disintegration and tough economic times. There were other factors that contributed to children leaving home at early ages beginning in the late 1960s. These included the explosion of communal living situations, dissatisfaction with the war in Vietnam and the mandatory draft, along with expanded educational opportunities for women. Many youths simply left home because of strained family relationships and a lack of economic security. The front page

\footnotesize{the European Market,” \textit{The N.Y. Times} March 1, 1971. Sec.1, 1. Deirdre Carmody, “Phone Disruption Expected to Last at Least 2 Weeks,” \textit{The N.Y. Times} March 1, 1971. Sec.1, 1.\(^\text{36}\) In contract to the inconsistent indexing of issues and subjects, both \textit{The N.Y. Times} and the \textit{L.A. Times} provided comprehensive indexing of people’s names.\(^\text{37}\) Robert McFadden, “8 Weeks Here a Lifetime For a Runaway Girl of 15,” \textit{The N.Y. Times}, March 1, Sec. 1, 1 & 30.}
article not only showcased a dangerous profession, but also revealed the practical limits of female sexual empowerment.

Of the two articles covering the end of Vietnam War on the front page, one announced the extension of President Ford’s clemency deadline for draft dodgers, and the other was simply a picture of a boy and woman injured by a rocket attack in Cambodia. Pictures from the war zones continued to be a daily reminder of America’s loss. Located below-the-fold, the photograph’s accompanying text was located on page three and offered the return of the deposed Cambodian monarch as a possible peace option. 38 In 1968, Nixon authorized the expansion of the Vietnam War into Cambodia with Operation Menu, a massive secret bombing campaign, which combined with the deposition of the Cambodian head of state by an American supported coup, plunged Cambodia into chaos. Like other front page photos of women and children war victims, the article did not mention the actual subjects of the photo. The piece spoke of strategy, outcomes, and negotiations rather than those who suffered as the result of war. 39

Beyond the war, rape, and economic issues on the front page, the March 1 issue of The N.Y. Times covered a wide variety of issues central to men and women’s concerns.

Other articles included: the pending Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), 40 the women’s

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38 Associate Press Photograph, “Cambodians Going to The Aid,” The N.Y. Times, March 1, 1975, Sec. 1, 1 and 3.
39 See Associated Press Photograph, “Faces of Fear,” L.A. Times, March 21, 1975, Sec. 1, 1 & 14. The front page photo features a Cambodian woman huddled with her five children in a dug-out dirt bunker. The entire text of the article was printed on page 14 and mentioned the evacuation of Neal Luong, political and military targets, insurgents mortar and rocket attacks, and a brief overview of the battle. The evacuation of the wounded and of civilians is mentioned in very general terms, but no mention of the woman and children featured in the front page photo. While the article focuses on political and military issues and strategy, page 14 also features a small photo of a boy holding a gun with the caption, “ARMED—A Cambodian boy carries rifle on Route 5 in Phom Penh. Soldiers there often bring families along, the wife to do cooking and children to run errands.” The boy appears to be approximately nine years old, but apart from the caption, nothing is mentioned in the text of the article regarding the role of women and children in the war.
national indoor track championships, and the fate of Title IX legislation (like the coverage in the *L.A. Times*), a high school class discussion held on Susan B. Anthony Day led by National Organization of Women (NOW) representatives, an appraisal of the changes in the marriage, divorce, and fertility rates, a look at the dramatic increase in Food Stamp and childhood food program participants, an editorial supporting state funded day-care programs, as well as a letter to the editor discussing a recent manslaughter conviction of a physician in Massachusetts for performing a second trimester abortion. Similar to the *L.A. Times*, only two of these eight articles were indexed under topics that addressed men and women’s issues. Although *The N.Y. Times* was providing more coverage and keeping much better track of women’s issues than the *L.A. Times*, most articles were not indexed.

*The N.Y. Times* coverage of the indoor track championships is a good example of how the paper provided more comprehensive coverage of women than the *L.A. Times*. *The N.Y. Times* provided a great deal more information, including a photograph on the front page and another on page sixteen, along with forty sentences of written coverage that included the winners, the controversy over poor management by Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) officials, and first hand experiences as articulated by several athletes. In

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45 Nancy Hicks, “Food Stamp Use Up 700,000 in Month,” *The N.Y. Times*, March 1, 1975, Sec. 1, 23.
48 The Susan B. Anthony Day discussion was indexed under “Women,” and the letter to the editor under “Abortion.”
comparison, the *L.A. Times* provided a single photograph and only twelve sentences of coverage. Moreover, *The N.Y. Times* provided follow up coverage of the event, listed all of the women’s and men’s top finishers, interviewed the athletes, and included a photo the following day of the two-mile women’s race. The *L.A. Times* did not provide any follow up coverage.\(^{49}\)

Although *The N.Y. Times* provided thorough coverage of women’s sports, such coverage did not conform to the editorial guidelines distributed in 1974 by the McGraw-Hill Book Company as published in *New York Times Magazine* which began: “Men and women should be treated primarily as people, and not primarily as members of opposite sexes. Their shared humanity and common attributes should be stressed, not their gender difference.”\(^ {50}\) The front page indoor track coverage began with the line, “Love triumphs over all, even in a cross-country romance, the Amateur Athletic Union learned last night from its star women’s distance runner, Francie Larrieu.” Talk of “romance” and “love” was common in mid-1970s American discourse, since the central figure in the article was a single woman. The focus on “love” reinforced women’s roles as objects of male affection rather than world-class athletes. Further, the article disclosed how Larrieu chose to compete against the Soviet Union the following Monday only because her boyfriend also qualified for the competition. In the mid-1970s, teasing out themes of “love” and “sex” were common practice in newspaper coverage because they not only drew from the

\(^{49}\) The national meet was held in New York City which could account for the fact that *The N.Y. Times* covered the event with a reporter whereas the *L.A. Times* reprinted information from the Associated Press news service.

\(^{50}\) “‘Man!’ Memo from a Publisher,” *New York Times Magazine*, October 20, 1974.
ongoing sexual revolution, but addressed, albeit in subtle ways, the renegotiation of the right, roles, and responsibilities of men and women.

The following day’s Sunday edition (March 2) included over 300 pages of traditional print news. The weekly capstone issue, like its daily counterparts, provided coverage of a wide array of specific hot button issues including abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, changes within the family, adjustments to social services, and many sex related topics from crime and prostitution, to discussions of human sexuality, the private lives of public figures, and pornography. Additionally, a handful of in-depth pieces in *The N.Y. Times Magazine* insert examined the lives of single and married women, including women enjoying pornography and an insightful piece exploring the changing role of women in American society through the prism of fashion trends. The Sunday edition’s circulation of 1,419,329 was more than twice that of Saturday. Even without considering the lengthy advertising and magazine inserts which were largely targeted at women, its approximate 300 pages dedicated significant print space to women’s issues.

The Sunday edition included front page coverage of the contested Equal Rights Amendment,\(^{51}\) possible excessive issuing of food stamps,\(^{52}\) and the effects of high inflation on Chilean families that focuses on how their women struggle to keep food on the table while making tough decisions that include sending children to live with relatives in the hope that they will be better fed.\(^{53}\) The front section included a proposed

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government study of “smut,” along with a review of a historical exhibit of love letters, and a debate about public funding of art. “City Seeking $1.7 Million for Times Sq. Smut Fight,” covered the proposal of a law-enforcement-sponsored study of prostitution, pornography, and massage parlors in midtown New York. “28 Love Letters of History Shown,” covered an exhibit at the Library of Congress of romantic letters from notable historical figures that included eight American presidents. The front section also featured a charged debate between the National Endowment of the Arts and the New Hampshire governor who refused to approve its allocation for a profane literary periodical. The governor withheld the funds because he deemed the publication obscene. The financial crisis of the 1970s created an atmosphere in which public funding of projects, especially those that addressed liberal lifestyles, were very controversial.

Throughout the Sunday edition, the themes of sexuality, family, love, public funding, and women’s equality were central to many articles. For example, “Australia Gives Cyclones Sex-Equality Treatment,” tells how in a move to support United Nations International Women’s Year, the Australian science minister thereafter named cyclones after men, rather than the traditional practice of giving them women’s names. This represented a cultural shift in how women were stereotyped and thus a reflection of women’s empowerment. Within the atmosphere of women’s liberation, practices that had sexist components or gender biases were increasingly difficult to perpetuate.

56 “Gov. Thompson in Row Over Arts Grant,” March 2, 1975, Sec. 1, 38.
For example, it was more and more difficult to classify women’s behavior as unpredictable and emotional. Associating the unpredictable activity of natural phenomena, such as a tropical storm, with the female gender was becoming harder to support. These topics gave voice to widespread tensions and provided a safety valve for heightened emotions throughout a period of significant cultural changes. Discussion of the naming of cyclones, the crackdown on pornography in Times Square, or the love life of a female athlete spoke to the larger fears associated with changes between men and women. Seemingly unrelated topics provided venues in which men and women’s issues could be addressed, better understood, and thus gradually worked out in the public sphere. Public exhibitions, such as the review of love letters from famous historical figures, provided a safe venue to think about and discuss men and women’s rights, roles, and responsibilities.

The front page in the Brooklyn, Queens, and Long Island (BQLI) section on March 1 was more direct, as it addressed changing reproductive values. It showcased a legal suit brought against a Long Island medical center that refused to perform second trimester abortions. The center strongly defended its policy and argued against the recent conviction of a doctor in Massachusetts for performing a late second trimester abortion. The conviction produced a continuous debate within the pages of *The N.Y. Times* throughout February, sending shock waves throughout the medical community. Hospitals and doctors were concerned that they could be prosecuted for conducting a routine medical procedure. Some chose to stop providing second trimester abortions.58

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58 Max H. Seigel, “Medical Center Challenged on Abortions,” *The N.Y. Times*, March 2, 1975, Sec. BQLI, 1.
Further into the BQLI section an article focused on housewives from the tip of Long Island who worked together on a co-op. By collaborating to purchase whole foods in bulk, they were saving money and increasing the quality of their foods. And in the New Jersey section, “Feminists Continue Attack on Governor,” explored the partisan politics of the New Jersey governor’s selection of an Advisory Commission of the Status of Women. The geographically specific sections within The N.Y. Times, like the L.A. Times regional sections addressed the concerns of specific communities. One group of women was putting pressure on elected officials to foster gender equality, while others were developing sources of healthy and affordable food for their families.

The front page of “Arts and Leisure” the same day featured an article on gender roles within the dance profession. “Drag Ballet: Can Men Make It In a Women’s World?” featured a svelte man in full ballerina garb, women’s make-up, and a cigarette dangling from his lip. The articed directly addressed how men and women play roles. The title was a play on the more commonly circulated question: “Can women make it in a man’s world?” The title asked the reader to reverse the popular question of women’s fitness for competition and sparked debate as it revealed that gender discrimination flows both ways. The article stated how “[e]ach of the performers sees herself” as a specifically imagined ‘ballerina’ with a gamut of personal graces and foibles.” The article presents a dissected view of gender, revealing how roles are social constructs and are enactments carried out by individuals, not determined by biology. The directors dress and

59 Barbara Delatner, “North Folk Housewives Start Co-op to Beat Food Prices,” The N.Y. Times, March 2, 1975, Sec. BQLI, 6.
choreograph the men who “with deadly artistic seriousness” perform with a “peculiarly haunting beauty.” The central theme of the article is that gender is a cultural construct.\textsuperscript{61}

Another article on front page of the “Arts and Leisure” section examined the role that sounds play in human sexual intercourse. For many, sexual liberation meant sexual experimentation. “The World Is Alive With The Sound of Sounds,” featured the recent release of three recording by Syntonic Research Inc. that included the human heart acoustically engineered to aid sex. According to the company, the lovemaking recording “plays back the heartbeat at the rate of forty beats per minute, much slower than the average, so that when sexual partners coordinate their movement to it, coitus is prolonged and intensified.” The article described how people have always made love to a variety of sounds, and more recently in human history utilized music such as Maurice Ravel’s 1928 ballet ‘Bolero’ to inspire intercourse.\textsuperscript{62} As men and women’s relationships were changing, so too were their intimate interactions. For some, listening to the recordings produced by Syntonic Research Inc. was likely considered sexually hip because it permitted intercourse to be longer and more unified. But for others such sounds may have been more revolutionary, facilitating sexual equality in which the purpose of and pleasure derived, served both parties mutually. Both this article and the one mentioned above regarding gender roles within ballet, highlight the role of art in exploring human behavior among the sexes. From public performance to intimate private exchanges, gender roles were being renegotiated.


The aforementioned articles from early March 1975 are but a small sample of printed coverage addressing the discussion of an renegotiation of men and women’s roles, rights, and responsibilities as printed in The New York Times throughout March 1975. Articles featuring aspects of men and women’s issues were ubiquitous throughout 1975. Although the Equal Rights Amendment and Title IX were the dominant legal and political issues affecting women, articles that addressed the more personal negotiations between men and women, both in their public and private lives, proved enticing to publishers. American attitudes towards sex, marriage, and all intimate relationships were central to political and cultural debates of the mid-1970s.

Golden Fleece Coverage by the Los Angeles Times

The front page of the L.A. Times on Wednesday March 12, 1975, showcased Proxmire’s criticisms of love research with the catchy title, “Ah, Sweet Mystery! Scientific Love Study Turns Proxmire Off.” Located in the bottom right corner of the page the article also featured a second slightly smaller all capitalized title, “PREFERS TO LEAVE IT A MYSTERY.” How a scientific love study could turn the senator “off” was explained with a reference to his personal life. Proxmire had recently reconciled with his second wife following over three years of separation. The sexual slang for lack of interest connected Proxmire’s marital problems with the scientific research that he attacked. It implied that Proxmire’s separation was the result of sexual and or emotional issues.

The article’s author, an L.A. Times’ staff writer, quoted from Proxmire’s press release the day before: “I believe that 200 million other Americans want to leave some
things in life a mystery, and right at the top of things we don’t want to know is why a man falls in love with a woman and vice versa.”\textsuperscript{63} The simple statement contained layers of nuanced commentary regarding the ongoing struggles among men and women. First, Proxmire considered romantic love as beyond the pale of rational conceptualization. Love simply could not be understood scientifically, thus it was an illegitimate field of study. Second, the mystery of love hinted that it was fickle and could easily be disrupted.\textsuperscript{64} Third was the assumption that romantic love only applied to the relationships between men and women. Proxmire’s statement rejected the possibility the members of the same sex could romantically love each other.

The \textit{L.A. Times} connected Proxmire’s fear of understanding love with his personal life. The playful headline and details within the article revealed that Proxmire’s marital life had not been blissful. However, it was unclear whether his private problems were the result of too much information or the product of ignorance:

Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.), who recently was reconciled with his second wife after nearly four years of estrangement, came out Tuesday against a scientific approach to what he calls ‘the love racket.’ …Proxmire married his present wife, the former Mrs. Ellen Hodges Seawall in 1956 after having been divorced from his first wife, a great grand-niece of John D. Rockefeller Sr. In 1971, the senator issued a press release announcing that he and Mrs. Proxmire had separated. Recently he issued another saying they had ‘resumed their life together.’\textsuperscript{65}

His personal troubles were related to the scientific study by the author of the article. The \textit{L.A. Times} presented Proxmire in a precarious position from which to attack scientific

\textsuperscript{64} As discussed in Chapter One, historian Beth Bailey argues that many worried that the proper relationship between the sexes was being disrupted. Beth Bailey & David Farber, \textit{America in the 1970s} (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 119.
\textsuperscript{65} Barkdoll, “Ah, Sweet Mystery!” A. 1.
research of “love.” The author took the liberty of connecting Proxmire’s political stance with his personal life, reversing the more common position supported by the women’s liberation movement that personal issues were also politically relevant.

The article continued with a question from the “soft-spoken” University of Minnesota researcher Dr. Ellen Berscheid, asking “Doesn’t the senator think a child wants to know why his father doesn’t come home?” According to the L.A. Times reporter, at first Berscheid was reserved and reluctant to respond to Proxmire’s attack. However, after being pressed, she responded aggressively. The professor protested the award and criticized the senator:

I assume the senator has some knowledge of the divorce rate in this country and understands that the absence of love is the basis on which many divorces are initiated. I believe he has been divorced and recently was reconciled with his second wife. He ought to realize better than most people why we should know all we can about the determinants of affection.\(^{66}\)

She also stated, “it is so easy for him to go after something like this.” Berscheid did not present a technical explanation of the research or provide any results in order to support her work. She simply stated that anyone expecting to be titillated by the research would be disappointed because “We are engaged in basic research, nothing sensational.”\(^{67}\)

As a member of the National Science Foundation Appropriations Subcommittee, Proxmire was charged with reviewing its budget and had begun leveling attacks against the agency in January. Just a few weeks before the March Golden Fleece Award, the L.A. Times published another Proxmire’s attack on the National Science Foundation (NSF).

His criticisms of its funding process were covered in the Associate Press article,

\(^{66}\) Ibid., A. 11.
\(^{67}\) Ibid.
“Sen. Proxmire Critical of U.S. Science Grants.” Located on page five of section one, it outlined the senator’s criticism of the NSF grant allocation process and pointed out several projects of questionable merit. Proxmire stated how NSF grants are mostly awarded to the same handful of large universities that are also responsible for judging the effectiveness of the agency. From his perspective, this flawed process provided preferential treatment to scientists from these same universities, and supported many unworthy projects. Proxmire argued that if presented in a more competitive process, many of the current proposals would not have received funding. Proxmire provided several recent examples in order to make his point. He provocatively referenced a study assessing the integration of hitchhiking into the national transportation system and another study that asked whether or not Americans believe in the devil. Proxmire argued the agency’s allocation process was seriously flawed.68

On March 15, three days after the first Golden Fleece Award, another article featuring “relationship science” and Senator Proxmire was published. On the second page of the front section was the article, “$342,000 for Student Sex Survey a Waste: Proxmire.” Proxmire’s office has actually issued the press release the week before the love study, but the L.A. Times only judged it newsworthy after the controversy surrounding the love research. The United Press International article outlined Proxmire’s attack on an ongoing University of Wisconsin study that investigated the sexual habits of the university’s students. The study was funded through the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Proxmire’s criticisms included how the award was non-competitive and that

funding was $99,761 more than had been requested. He stated, “Not only does this study raise serious questions concerning the invasion of privacy, but it also appears to be a waste of taxpayers’ money.”

Proxmire’s position on the Senate Appropriations Committee provided him with detailed information of all scientific expenditures of the federal government and provided him with the authority to question their effectiveness and efficacy.

Proxmire’s criticisms of “love” and “sex” research in the *L.A. Times* all appeared in section one. As evident in surrounding coverage from the first half of 1975, both private and public relationships between men and women were considered newsworthy each daily. Like *The New York Times*, countless articles ran in the *L.A. Times* covering the debates between men and women in early March, including but not limited to:

“Parliament Member Asks Less Work, Time for Sex,” in which a British elected official complained that the long working hours of his position were preventing him from having intercourse; “Assembly OK’s Homosexual Bill Of Rights,” in which the California Assembly passed a bill legalizing all private sex acts among consenting adults; “Nude Photos No Reason to Fire Teacher, Panel Rules,” in which the ousting of a high school teacher for his appearance in *Playgirl Magazine* was overturned by a state oversight panel; “Court Affirms Right to Name Rape Victim,” in which the United States Supreme Court upheld the first amendment right of news agencies to provide the names of rape victims; “Shining Light of the Dark Ages: Birth-Control Pioneer,” a lengthy

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72 AP, “Nude Photos No Reason to Fire Teacher, Panel Rules.” *L.A. Times*, March 5, 1975, Sec. 1, 3.

biographical sketch of a woman who led the charge for sex education;\(^74\) and “Youth Convicted in Houston Sex, Torture Slaying,” in which twenty-year-old David Owen Brooks was convicted for being part of a sex and torture ring with over twenty-seven victims.\(^75\) Some of these articles covered serious crimes, but they all expressed widespread cultural concerns. They were not sensationalized stories, but sincere investigations of reproductive, sexual, personal, and criminal issues. They each expressed a society heavily invested in the negotiations of relationships among men and women. Whether articles covered contraception, the fine tuning of rape crime laws, or even a more heinous sexual murder ring, they suggested that American society was coming to terms with changing sexual freedoms, criminal activity, and their overlap with men and women’s changing relationships.

Proxmire’s first Golden Fleece to the $84,000 “love” study fell in with this ongoing debate. The fact that the news articles provided debate between a male congressman and a female researcher fed into the period’s “battle of the sexes” trope which also doubled as the title of the 1973 nationally televised tennis match between the women’s champion Billie Jean King and the ex-men’s champion Bobby Riggs. However, Proxmire’s attacks were not limited to “love” and “sex” studies. He was a fiscal conservative who never deliberately focused on the moral implications of the research that he criticised. Proxmire targeted many others, including studies on hitchhiking, the Alaskan brown bear, primate teeth, and the African climate during the Ice Age. However, “love” research garnered the most attention. The article continued on page eleven with


\(^75\) UPI, “Youth Convicted in Houston Sex, Torture Slaying,” \textit{L.A. Times}, March 5, 1975, Sec. 1, 5.
side-by-side gender specific photographs of Berscheid and Proxmire with the caption, “PROXMIRE, LOVE,” in bold capital letters. Berscheid sported pearls, a blouse, and suit jacket, with her hair curled in large waves, a small smile, and chin wrestling comfortably on her half-closed fist. The senator is in a business coat and tie, hair slicked back, looking off-center from the camera, mouth open in mid-sentence. The photo of Berscheid reinforces her as a physically attractive and demure woman, while Proxmire’s photo conveys a professional man making important statements. Gender stereotypes reigned supreme not only in advertising, but in the hard news pictures of section one.

On Sunday March 16—four days later—the L.A. Times followed up with an editorial board response and a constituent’s letter to the editor. The staff editorial begins by providing some fiscal perspective: “The new defense budget, for instruments of war, now stands at more than $90 billion, but Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.) is against appropriating $84,000 for love.” The editorial outlined the back-and-forth arguments presented in the original article while maintaining a sense of humor, with its title, “Love Will Find a Way.” Continuing to reinforce themes of romance, the editors sought to solve the “estrangement” between the senator and the researcher, tied the research to Proxmire’s personal life, and mocked the Senator by stating that his predictable response to personal and professional issues was a press release. Proxmire was well known throughout the news industry because his office sent out multiple press releases each week. The editors of the L.A. Times probably assumed that Proxmire devoted more time to issuing press releases than to his personal life. The editors went on to explain that many legislators in Washington issued press releases that had nothing to do with the

76 Barkdoll, “Ah, Sweet Mystery!” A. 11.
affairs of the state and proposed that if Congress refrained from wasting government “paper and ink and staff time on like fripperies” that the savings would be at least $84,000 per year. The entire piece was playful in nature, and full of word puns that continued to tease out the theme of “love.” Some of those included comparing “affairs of state,” to “affairs of the heart,” and “romantic love” to “brotherly love.” In supporting “love” research, the editors employed a lighthearted approach.77

A constituent letter to the editor from a Fountain Valley resident was printed adjacent to the editorial. It voiced strong support for “love” research and attacked Proxmire, stating that “just because he doesn’t understand the work, he condemns it as a waste of money.” The author presented a hypothetical case in which the senator would not have supported Einstein’s work because he could not understand it, and argued that the real waste of money is “in paying Proxmire’s salary!”78 That same day three letters to the editor appeared which commented on an investigation into celibacy in the Catholic Church. Two letters recognized that denying men sexual gratification was problematic, while the third letter penned by a group of seminary students declared themselves “happy and willing to be giving ourselves to our God and our Church.”79

Another constituent letter overlapped several of the issues raised by Proxmire’s criticisms of scientific research. A University of California, Irvine professor wrote that the mission of the University of California system is to “advance graduate study, professional training, and research,” and that this was undermined through a reduction in

funding. Professor Maradudin argued that the importance of research was often not apparent for years, and that to assess research based upon marketability or its immediate application is flawed. He wrote, “In a time when ‘relevance’ and ‘utility’ have become guiding principles for so much that goes on in society,” it would be tragic if the university compromised its commitment to “knowledge for the sake of knowledge.”

Without reference to the Golden Fleece debate, the letter to the editor complemented Berscheid’s own claim that funding of basic research was necessary to the scientific process.

In the third week of March the flow of articles and editorials covering relationships among men and women carried on unabated. “Creation of County Panel on Status of Women Urged,” and “USC Accused of Faculty Sex Bias,” were both featured on the front page. Los Angeles County proposed to establish a commission in order to investigate the social, political, and economic restrictions that resulted in women’s denial of certain basic human rights. The small front page article, “USC Accused of Faculty Sex Bias,” covered the U.S. Department of Labor conclusion that the University of Southern California discriminated against women faculty members by not paying them salaries equal to men. The editorial, “Rent and the Single Person,” addressed how the new emphasis on equality for women has brought to light a major defect in California’s 1963 Fair Housing Act. The law failed to recognize gender or marital status as protected classes. The following day another editorial, “Sex Bias in Social Security,” supported the

recent Supreme Court decision to apply survivor benefits evenly to men and women. Previously widowers were restricted from receiving full survivor benefits.\footnote{“Sex Basis in Social Security,” \textit{L.A. Times}, March 21, 1975, Sec. 2, 6. Of these five articles and letters, only “Creation of County Panel on Status of Women Urged,” was the only indexed article.}

Senator Proxmire did not appear again in the \textit{L.A. Times} until mid-April. Page twenty-three of section one featured April’s Golden Fleece with the title: “Proxmire Clenches His Jaws Over New Study: $500,000 'Fleece.’” The study was supported by three federal agencies, including the NSF, yet was characterized by Proxmire as “monkey business.” Once again, Proxmire used humor to highlight an issue. He explained some of the study’s findings, including how monkeys “became angry when they were shocked and would try to get away from the shock,” and that “drunk monkeys do not usually react as quickly or as often as sober monkeys and that hungry monkeys get angry more quickly than well-fed monkeys.” Proxmire was upset by the fact that Dr. Nathan Hutchinson of Kalamazoo State Hospital (Michigan) conducted a number of research projects examining how primates and humans respond to anger over a seven-year period.\footnote{Times Wire Service, “Proxmire Clenches His Jaws Over New Study: $500,000 'Fleece,'” \textit{L.A. Times}, April 19, 1975, Sec. 1, 23.}

Proxmire did not believe that basic scientific research, the type of inquiry that does not seek to solve a specific social ill, should be funded by the federal government. Proxmire’s criticisms met stern defensive statements from Hutchinson, who pointed to the high social costs of human violence, and explained: “As the understanding of the causes of anger, aggression, and violent antisocial acts has become more clear, the possibility of improved treatment for individuals and corrective action for their environments comes closer to reality.” Along with learning which types of environmental
stress provoke anger and aggression, the research found that certain drugs could reduce those reactions. Hutchinson concluded his defense with an attack, stating that “public, uninformed, and inexpert discredit of work which is so socially necessary… causes a disservice.” Hutchinson believed that Proxmire did not understand his work, echoing the defense of “love” research by Berscheid the previous month. Proxmire was gifted at stirring up public debate, but his criticisms of “love” research proved more titillating to the public than the study of primate anger. There were no editorials, letters to the editor, or followup articles concerning the second Golden Fleece Award.

**Golden Fleece Coverage by The New York Times**

Like the *L.A. Times, The N.Y. Times* also covered Proxmire’s criticism of wasteful spending by the National Science Foundation early in 1975. Before the first official Golden Fleece Award, section one on March 6, featured the short United Press International article, “Student Sex Survey Scored By Proxmire.” Again, the title played on words, using the slang term for having just had sex, “scored” rather than “scorned” or “criticized.” The piece articulated the senator’s belief that a $342,000 Michigan State University study of student sexual habits should be financed privately. In the article Professor David J. Kallen defended his work, calling the attack a “distortion of fact regarding a legitimate and important research undertaking.” As covered in the *L.A. Times*, Proxmire’s charges also included “invasion of privacy” and an evocation of public outrage by explaining how the study examined the factors contributing to the use of birth control devices among unmarried college students. Proxmire assumed the socially conservative position that federal funds should not be allocated to address controversial

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85 Ibid.
moral issues, but he did not assume the position that researchers should not study such topics. Proxmire, again, simply did not believe that it was the role of the federal government to provide funding for basic research.**86**

*The N.Y. Times* did not provide immediate coverage of Proxmire’s first Golden Fleece Award. However, the topic proved too interesting for the paper to ignore. Its syndicated columnist James Reston on Friday, March 14, responded at length to Proxmire’s criticisms of “love” research. The practical application of the research was evident to the long-time columnist, whose 700 plus word commentary was reprinted in papers across the country. A journalistic heavyweight whose career spanned the mid-1930s through the early 1990s, **87** Reston quoted from the National Center for Health Statistics of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and noted that twice as many divorces took place in 1974 as compared to 1965. Reston then asked several broad and culturally significant questions, such as, “Why this increase in divorce, this decrease in marriage, [and] this disbelief in the family as the basis of American life?” The institution of marriage and family life in general was clearly undergoing massive transformations. Men and women’s private and public relationships as well as sexual relationships were being re-evaluated. Reston witnessed long-term trends within American culture and believed that “love” research held the potential to understand better these changes and inform the ongoing cultural debates.**88**

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Reston interpreted the economic turbulence as a component of the larger social change that impacted the American family unit. He addressed how economic security was part of a family’s stability. He asked philosophically, “Were the expectations of married life unreasonably high? Were the assumptions of courtship, and of economic security an enduring reality or a trap?” And, “What was romantic love anyway—a basis for secure family and national life, or a dangerous illusion?” His questions burrowed into a series of culturally specific values that were central to the cohesion of the postwar American family. Reston questioned the cultural assumptions that the homogenized American family was a baby-producing and product-consuming group. Reston interpreted Proxmire’s assault on relationship science as representative of a much larger trend: a refusal to fully examine cultural values and practices, an unwillingness to objectively examine social changes, and to question the conditioned roles through which men and women learned to interact with one another.  

The cultural assumptions about love, sex, and marriage that were common in the postwar baby boom were being rewritten in 1975. The obsession with “love” and “sex” in the coverage of the *L.A. Times* and *The N.Y. Times* reflected a society struggling to redefine private and public relationships between men and women. Reston incisively asks his readers to ponder the questions “What is romantic love anyway?” Is it the belief in the two-parent family and the ’happily ever after’ myth? Is it the center of American cultural identity which created postwar prosperity? The suburban tract homes, material affluence within the new homes, and a family unit that focused unprecedented resources on its children were all possible in part because marriage was overwhelmingly accepted

89 Ibid.
as the ideal living situation. When the national divorce rate doubled between 1965 and 1974, the living and working situations for millions of families across America changed and the blueprint for postwar prosperity unraveled. In addition, the rights of minorities—including women and those with alternative lifestyles—won legitimacy within the nation’s legal and financial institutions. This supported many new living options outside of the traditional two-parent household. The legal definition and cultural expression of “family” became much more inclusive.

Reston posited the changing family structure as the true objective of the National Science Foundation’s grant to study love. “The reasons why people fall in love,” wrote Reston, “or think they do, will always be a mystery, and many people, like Mr. Proxmire, probably ’don’t want the answer.’” But, he continues, “if the sociologists and psychologists can get even a suggestion of the answers to our pattern of romantic love, marriage, disillusion, divorce—and the children left behind—it could be the best investment of federal money since Mr. Jefferson made the Louisiana Purchase.” Knowledge and insights into the various factors causing interpersonal trauma, economic hardships, and large-scale disruptions were, from Reston’s perspective, well deserving of taxpayers’ money.90

Reston’s column kicked-off the discussion of “love” research within The N.Y. Times. On March 14, Proxmire sent a rebuttal directly to Reston which the paper published on Sunday, March 23. In defense of his “award,” Proxmire stated that if the funds were actually spent to study the increasing divorce rate, the decrease in marriage, and the lack of faith in the family as the basis of American life, then there might be some

90 Ibid.
merit to the National Science Foundation grant. However, according to Proxmire, the grant did not even mention marriage or divorce. Instead, quoting from the proposal, Proxmire stated that it talked of “dependency constructs,” “predictive domains,” “hypothesized dependency variables,” and “dyadic relationships.”

No novice to debate, at the time Proxmire had been participating in electoral politics for three decades. In order to further explicate his point, Proxmire included the whole text of the research proposal within his letter. The approximately one-hundred and fifty word summary—what Proxmire was provided when reviewing the NSF grant allocations—is littered with social science jargon and lacks a single reference to the important social issues cited by Reston. The only aspect of the summary which would be decipherable to a lay reader is a single reference each to “romantic love,” “attraction,” and “love and hate.” Proxmire’s letter made a strong case justifying his Golden Fleece Award. The grant proposal simply did not mention “marriage” or “divorce.” Proxmire provided clear and intuitive arguments.

Proxmire showed how the research proposal was neither clear nor accessible. However, this tactic belied his ignorance not of love, as he wryly claimed in his original press release, but of the academic language and discourse of the psychological research under question. Neither Proxmire nor his critics addressed how the research proposal was intended for an academic audience. It was simply not designed to provide an accessible description or explain how basic research had large scale applications. Professors Hatfield and Berscheid’s proposal was tailored to fit a body of scholarly work that would

92 Ibid.
have likely been familiar only to its scientific reviewers at the National Science Foundation along with the few dozen of specialists within their sub-field of interpersonal attraction. To the non-indoctrinated reader, which included the senator and most of the public, the research proposal was not only difficult to understand, but lacked practical application.

The public debate within the pages of *The N.Y. Times* did not end with Proxmire’s compelling justification for his Golden Fleece Award. On April 10, a letter to the editor was published from Bernard I. Murstein, professor of psychology at Connecticut College. The professor acknowledged the economic troubles facing the nation, a topic commonly covered by all newspapers throughout 1975, but proposed that, “love is the most important factor in the human condition. Any knowledge that we can obtain that furthers our understanding of this concept would be invaluable.”

The response by a fellow psychologist was predictably supportive of the research. Murstein was personally invested in the defense of and justification for “love” research. He had numerous publications in the area of relationship science by 1975 (his publications totaled more than one hundred and fifty by the year 2000), and he had included a chapter by Hatfield, entitled “Passionate Love,” in his 1971 text *Theories of Attraction and Love*.

Murstein’s main argument was that “experimental research methodology” can be used to advance the scientific understanding of love. He believed that the field of social psychology had the potential to uncover the most complex and intriguing human questions. Yet, his arguments were not as accessible or convincing as Proxmire’s.

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Murstein did not effectively explain how Hatfield and Berscheid’s research, as outlined in the proposal, was applicable to real world situations or problems. He stated that their research has applications to current social problems but does not support this with evidence or examples. He failed to explain to a lay audience how the complicated research process within the social sciences can eventually address or even solve social problems, or how research is a lengthy, ongoing endeavor, and further how organizations that affect public policy need to be willing to implement such findings. The process from useful knowledge to application is lengthy and fraught with debate even once that knowledge has been acquired. In short, Murstein failed to clearly connect the “love” research to useful solutions, which was the focus of Proxmire’s rebuttal.

Rather than bridge the gap, Murstein widened the divide between the academic and public spheres. He accused the senator of not understanding the research, and challenged him to criticize it as “faulty, weak,” or “incompetent.” His challenge was valid but held little potential to sway public opinion. From Proxmire’s original press release it is clear that engaging the merits of the research was never intended. He did not single out Hatfield and Berscheid’s research in order to challenge its academic validity, but rather to show federal funds spent on ‘love’ research as ridiculous. Murstein had the opportunity to share with a wide audience the methods and concepts of a highly specialized field within the social sciences. Instead, his letter to the editor chose to articulate Proxmire’s ignorance of the research, but his reaction to such research was also the most likely public response. Murstein berated the senator and the public at large, stating that the senator resorted to “demagoguery” by playing “up to an ignorant
readership” who in their current frustration was only too eager to believe that the National Science Foundation was as incompetent as our “leaders in Washington.” He concluded his attack on Proxmire by calling those who supported the senator an “ignorant readership” and recommending that Proxmire “stick to jogging [rather] than to resort to blubbery spoutings about love.”

This letter to the editor concluded the public debate as covered by The N.Y. Times. Most of Proxmire’s subsequent Golden Fleece Awards throughout 1975 were covered, but none resulted in follow up articles or editorial comment. For example, in August, “Proxmire Scores U.S. Funding Of Study of Marijuana and Sex,” covered the senator’s criticism of a handful of federally funded drug studies, and singled out a $121,000 Southern Illinois University study of sexual arousal among college men under the influence of marijuana. Proxmire called it “one of the most shocking examples of the federal love machine I have ever found,” in reference to his previous “love” Fleece. The director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse, which sponsored the research, in defense of the project cited the value of understanding whether or not drug use impaired or enhanced sexual arousal. The director stated that “if indeed it [marijuana] interferes with sex functions, then this information is going to be important in deterring use.” The director also defended a handful of other drug studies, stating that less than two percent of the institute’s drug research funds were supporting the research attacked by Proxmire.

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95 Italics added.
Simply put, the number of articles that addressed love, sex, and all forms of relationships among men and women in 1975 within *The N.Y. Times* was prolific. Men and women’s issues were hot topics. Countless articles with parallel themes appeared throughout the debate over the first Golden Fleece Award. For example, within the March 23 issue, appearing just four pages after Proxmire’s rebuttal to Reston, the Sports section prominently featured the letter to the editor, “Let the Women Try Out for Men’s Teams.” The piece engaged the recent interpretation of Title IX legislation which mandated that equal opportunity be presented to women in education. The author proposed eliminating teams segregated by sex because “separate is never equal,” and proposed to have competitive tryouts without regard to sex in which the best athletes are selected for the team no matter what the sport.97

The same day two additional articles appeared that underscored the centrality of the debate surrounding institutionalized sexism and changing sexual and family practices. “Study Concluded That TV Promotes Stereotypes That Adversely Affect Children,” from the Brooklyn, Queens, and Long Island (BQLI) special section reported on work by the Media Action Research Center that concluded racial and sexual stereotypes portrayed on television were negatively influencing the behavior of children.98 And, the New Jersey special section feature, “Street Crime Tied To Broken Homes,” addressed the controversial proposal that increased street crime could be attributed to factors that resulted from family disintegration. From the perspective of a police official, more

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enforcement would not address the problem. The investigative piece argued for a more comprehensive assessment of resources and the application of sociology to address such problems. The official believed that the roots of street crime “lie in the disintegrating family structure... producing the ’disorganized family syndrome’ of the last three decades.”

Marriage and divorce, love, sex, and stereotypical roles for men and women were on the minds of countless Americans.

Conclusions: National Newspaper Coverage

Proxmire, a career politician and well-respected member of the Congress, was continuously covered by national news agencies. There were one hundred and seventy-seven total references under “Proxmire” in the New York Times yearly index. The three articles covering his First Golden Fleece showcase the issue as the single most controversial issue involving Proxmire covered by The New York Times throughout 1975.

The only other single issue that drew more coverage of Proxmire was the bailout of New York City by the federal government. Inheriting the chairmanship of the Banking

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99 “Street Crime Ties To Broken Homes,” March, 23, 1975, NJ, 11. Other articles that underscoring the centrality of women’s issues and those of gender included two from March 19 printed on the same page. “Liberated From Ties, They Try Scarves,” showcased a clothing chain that was not only featuring scarves as a new men’s fashion trend but also holding demonstrations on how to tie them, and “Taking Some of the Pain Out of Divorce, ’No-Fault’ Is a Growing Reality,” revealed how a growing number of states, forty-five in total, recognized ‘no-fault.’ New York was considering an even more liberal form that simply required one party to bring action against the marriage, not an individual, and dissolution would be granted by the courts. This more liberal form was currently legal in thirteen other states. The article, “Liberated From Ties...” attests to a growing embrace of the concept that liberation from gender and sexual stereotypes extended to. Bernadine Morris, “Liberated From Ties, They Try Scarves,” The N.Y. Times, March 19, 1975, Sec. 6, 33. Virginia Lee. Warren, “Taking Some of the Pain Out of Divorce, ’No-Fault’ Is a Growing Reality,” The N.Y. Times, March 19, 1975. Sec. 6, 33.

100 L.A. Times editorial board piece from November 19, 1975, applauded Proxmire for his diligent service, explaining that he had been present for every roll-call vote for the past nine years, which was 4,000 consecutive ayes or nays, to which no one in Congress can even come close. “The Senator Is In,” November 19, 1975, L.A. Times, Sec. 2, 8. In addition, Proxmire’s involvement in crafting and passing legislation that loaned New York City Federal funds also made him a very newsworthy subject to The New York Times. In just the last few months of 1975 he appeared thirty-one times in articles covering New York City’s financial crisis.

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Committee in 1975 and considered an economic expert, Proxmire was charged with evaluating whether the federal government should provide a loan guarantee to New York City. While overall the March Fleece accounted for a very small percent of *The N.Y. Times* articles in 1975 covering the Wisconsin senator, it represented the most significant example of a debate, and the only issue in 1975 that produced a personal rebuttal from Proxmire.\(^{101}\)

The four pieces published by the *L.A. Times* represented a significant portion of the paper’s coverage of Proxmire, which stood at thirty-three articles for all of 1975. One reason that this number is much lower than *The N.Y. Times* is the result of the *L.A. Times* refraining from covering Proxmire’s involvement in the New York City bailout by the federal government which alone accounted for thirty-one *N.Y. Times* articles throughout October, November, and December of 1975. In addition, *The N.Y. Times* provided more comprehensive coverage of Washington politics than the California based *L.A. Times*. Proxmire was an outspoken proponent of responsible government. His criticisms throughout 1975 were very broad and not limited to scientific research. In fact, scientific research accounted for a small portion of the hundreds of press releases that his office issued that year. His criticisms of the government included calling for probes of the Federal Reserve Bank and its chairman, the Central Intelligence Agency, warning of the pitfalls of the joint space program with the Soviet Union, condemning the chief of the Federal Trade Commission for halting an investigation into condominium sales practices, and demanding and audit of military airlifts through the end of the Vietnam War by the

\(^{101}\) Harvey L. Holmes and Delores D. Meglio, Ed. *The N.Y. Times Index*, 1975. Approximate count due to some articles listed multiple times under different subheadings. The index proved a reliable and comprehensive source for chronicling coverage of high-profile individuals.
In addition to being just a handful of his criticisms of government, Proxmire’s criticisms of science were not because he morally objected to the research or did not believe in the value of science. Rather, they resulted because he did not see the return on investment for the federal government and the taxpayers.

This chapter presented a wide variety of topics relating to men and women’s private and public relationships that were regularly covered in the pages of the nation’s two leading liberal East and West Coast newspapers. The breadth of topics addressed may not always appear to be related to men and women’s issues, such as the violent murders and sexual assaults, but even these gory crimes present an intersection of sexual practices and the application of the nation’s laws. Such an intersection allowed Americans to think about and discuss the limits of sexual liberation and contemplate how and why men and women’s relationships could be violent. At the same time, the California Assembly passed a bill legalizing all private sex acts among consenting adults as covered by the *L.A. Times*.\textsuperscript{102} It was clear that the boundaries of sexual practices were of political importance.

The first Golden Fleece Award was not worthy of front page news because taxpayers were out $84,000. In relation to the billion dollar federal budget, it was an insignificant amount. The first Golden Fleece Award was controversial because it touched upon the larger cultural debate surrounding men and women’s private and public relationships. Coverage of the first Golden Fleece represented another facet of this ongoing debate that drew from a wide variety of related concerns—such as a change in family structure, the liberalization of sexual practices, and women’s access to education

\textsuperscript{102} Gillam, “Assembly OK’s Homosexual Bill Of Rights.”
and other sources of empowering information. Like many of the topics that involved aspects of the issues between men and women, indexing was haphazard. If the issue involved a government agency or public official, then it was likely to be indexed as such, but not guaranteed. If the topic was more interpersonal, such as a family dispute, indexing was very unlikely. While the interpersonal and public relationships between men and women were debated, the importance of such issues was also being negotiated.

These tensions between men and women were expressed in many different kinds of articles, but all issues between men and women were hot topics. Coverage of these issues was likely to reinforce a subject’s gender, to further teasing out themes of “love” and “sex.” Puns and other sexual references not central to the content of a news article also reflect these tensions. The photos chosen, how women were presented and quoted, the placement and length of articles, in addition to how they were chronicled within a newspaper’s index, all reveal the ongoing power struggle between men and women in the public discourse. The issues chosen and how they were covered and remembered all reflect a nation grappling with balancing the importance of personal, professional, and political issues. The following chapter addresses the content, style, and chronicling issues within The Capital Times (Madison, WI) and the Chicago Tribune. Its close reading of articles makes two important contributions to the relevance of men and women’s debates. First, it reinforces the not so subtle differences in the style of coverage. For example, the Chicago Tribune often sensationalized issues, whereas the The Capital Times offered thoughtful in-depth articles, some presenting multi-day nuanced perspectives of pressing social concerns. Second, superficial versus the contemplative can
have far reaching impacts on how not only the public, but how individuals approach and contemplate an issue. The following chapter will show how detailed news articles that include expert interviews and are at times carried out over a series of days create a deeper understanding of the core issues, whereas single print sensationalized stories are more likely going to reinforce sexual stereotypes and perpetuate potentially harmful cultural assumptions regarding men and women’s roles, rights, and responsibilities.
Chapter 5

Conflicting Views of Men and Women: The *Chicago Tribune* Versus *The Capital Times*

If this is the language of romantic love, it’s a wonder that anybody in the country is still married.\(^1\)
--Editorial comments by the *Chicago Tribune* (1975)

He’s after every vote in the state[.]\(^2\)
--Anonymous Proxmire opponent (1975)

**Introduction: Chapter Overview**

This chapter examines the newspaper coverage from the *Chicago Tribune* and *The Capital Times* in order to flesh out how Americans debated men and women’s issues in 1975 and came to terms with how the personal, professional, and political were interwoven. The two papers served Proxmire’s constituents and the University of Wisconsin community, where Hatfield was a professor. The *Chicago Tribune* is an historically conservative midwestern paper published in Chicago Illinois, while *The Capital Times* was a liberal paper based in Madison, Wisconsin. These two papers were chosen for their wide circulation and because they are representative of the type of coverage that Proxmire’s constituents could easily access. This chapter will provide a more nuanced view of the ongoing debates between men and women in the mid-1970s, and how specific papers could engage that discussion very differently.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) “‘Romantic Love, My Foot!’” *Chicago Tribune*, March 31, 1975, Sec. 2, 2.
\(^3\) The *Wisconsin State Journal* was the other leading Wisconsin paper, but it did not provide a conservative stance or cover social issues as deeply as *The Capital Times*. Although conservative papers existed within Wisconsin, their readership was limited to a city or region, and were rejected for the purposes of this study due to their limited circulation. Thus, the *Chicago Tribune* was selected as representative of a conservative stance towards socially controversial issues and because it expressed concerns that were more specific to its midwestern audience.
The chapter includes a review of the editorial and news content of the *Chicago Tribune* from 1975, beginning with background on the paper’s restructuring in the late 1960s that included a turn away from older, hard-line Republicans, a trend that continued through the mid-1970s. In the spring of 1974, toward the end of the Watergate scandal, the paper’s call for the resignation of President Nixon effectively helped to undermine his power.4

By 1975, the deep scars of scandal and financial crisis were visible throughout the nation. Traditionally conservative, the *Tribune* increasingly addressed liberal causes. Along with government fiscal responsibility, concerns central to women were also part of daily news coverage. However, a detailed reading of the paper’s content reveals how news coverage often reinforced sexual stereotypes of women. These tendencies provided important context for how the paper covered Proxmire’s first Golden Fleece award, including the interviews and pictures with the event’s protagonists that wrap up the analysis of the *Tribune*. The second half of this chapter examines the editorial, news, and advertising content of *The Capital Times* and the historical origins of its unapologetic focus on men and women’s issues, the environment, the economy, and Wisconsin’s university system. These issues were important concerns for the state’s constituents and provide context for an examination of *The Capital Times’* coverage of Proxmire’s first Golden Fleece Award. This chapter’s analysis will limit its scope to examining how the paper addressed the many changes affecting men and women’s relationships.

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The Chicago Tribune: Historically Conservative

The Chicago Tribune was chosen because it is one of the nation’s most widely read daily newspapers, and it remains the leading paper in the Chicago metropolitan area. Throughout its long history, the Chicago Tribune has been very conservative. One notorious example came days before the 1959 presidential primary. Following a long-winded patriotic dialogue, the editors proclaimed, “A vote for Nixon is a vote for liberty.”\(^5\) The paper continues to be the largest regional newspaper serving Wisconsin as well as the entire Great Lakes Region including the Canadian Province of Ontario. It is widely distributed throughout the states of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, and Pennsylvania.

By the early 1970s, the paper’s conservative zeal was more restrained. On January 1, 1969, the paper welcomed new publishers and editors, along with a re-designed masthead atop the editorial pages. The paper declared that it would no longer always oppose change and outlined its revised political stance within the editorial section:

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\text{[C]hange must be made in light of tradition and the lessons of history…. The conservative is suspicious of untested theory. This has been the basic tenant of the Tribune’s conservatism throughout its history…. we expect to be generally Republican in politics…. We fought Republicans when they were wrong. We have supported Democrats when they were right. No political party should take the Tribune for granted….}^6
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The paper was adapting to the on-going cultural shifts of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The editorial proclamation opened the door for printing a wider array of political perspectives and was a signal that the character of the paper was adapting to the times.

\(^5\) Ibid., 734.
\(^6\) Ibid., 756.
Along with new management and changes in editorial staff and policy, the paper provided more print space to competing political perspectives with editorial content that now included additional political perspectives. The Sunday “Spotlight” section—previously limited to staff letters and reports—was deemed outdated, and was replaced with the “Perspective” section. According to reporter, newspaper historian, and famous cultural critic David Halberstam, the fresh “Perspective” section presented “varied editorial comment and in-depth reporting by staff members and outsiders.” The paper even hired known liberals to write for the Perspective section, causing a temporary stir with some readers and the older management figures who remained.

The trend to embrace discussion and accept dissension marked a shift from old style partisan politics. However, overall, the paper continued to be firmly Republican in its editorial stance and supported Nixon and other Republicans in the 1972 elections. As the Watergate scandal unfolded throughout 1973 and 1974, and even after seven former presidential aides were indicted in March 1974, the Chicago Tribune was one of a handful of papers that maintained adamant support for the president. The paper devoted four pages to transcripts of the president’s April 30, televised speech along with a written defense by Chicago’s Mayor Richard J. Daley. The Tribune’s editors also weighed in with their opinion: Nixon was not personally involved in Watergate. Within a week after

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7 Industry wide restructuring took place throughout the 1970s not only as management and staff reflected new viewpoints but as the economies of scale necessary to print a competitive newspaper required more and more resources and as newspapers proved strong investments throughout the 1970s recession. For restructuring of the L.A. Times, see Hart, The Information Empire, 332-333, 374. For an engagement with the monopolization of newspaper ownership and management, also see Hart 368-369 and for a brief overview of the strong investment that newspapers represented, see David Halberstam, The Powers That Be (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1975) 720, 721.
8 Wendt, The Chicago Tribune. 757.
9 Ibid., 769.
10 Ibid., 771.
publishing such editorials, the Oval Office tape recordings were released, providing unequivocal evidence that the President was deeply involved with the cover-up and obstruction of justice. Within twenty-four hours of their release, in what some Nixon supporters considered an act of betrayal, the Chicago Tribune published all 246,000 words of the Watergate tapes. Provided in a forty-four page supplement, the speedy publication was at the time an unprecedented publishing feat. The same day, May 7, the paper’s editors also demanded that Nixon resign or that Congress begin impeachment hearings. The scathing editorial shook up old-line Republicans and was republished by the Associated Press, the United Press, and countless international new agencies as a stand-alone story. The denouncement of Nixon by the Chicago Tribune and the ubiquitous loss of support that it reflected has been interpreted by many as the real end of Nixon’s presidency. Three months later Nixon officially resigned.11

**Shifting Priorities and Focus: the Chicago Tribune**

The changes in political positions, editorial staff, and format within the Chicago Tribune reflected the widespread changes taking place throughout American politics and culture. By the early 1970s, like other large papers, the Chicago Tribune devoted significant coverage to events and issues that involved men and women’s public and private relationships. But, the paper’s niche market and its importance in the Midwest remained its coverage of issues that affected the region. As the financial crisis of the 1970s unfolded, the paper focused attention on the hardships faced by its midwestern readers. Geographically-specific economic issues included union wage demands at factories and plants, farm subsidies, commodity prices, and weather’s impact upon travel

11 Ibid., 772-775.
and farming in the region. A survey of the paper from the first half of 1975 also includes reveals regular coverage of municipal tax increases, the link between poverty and teen prostitution, the tensions and debates fostered by the recession, the lull in all real estate activities, and Congress’s tax cuts and budget proposals.12

By the mid-1970s, concerns over the national budget and the nation’s leaders were commonplace. An editorial titled “Can Congress Control Itself?” in March 1975 was reminiscent of Senator Proxmire’s publication two years earlier, *Can Congress Control Spending?* The *Chicago Tribune*’s editorial argued that if the Senate approved a $33.1 billion tax cut, when coupled with an approximate $80 billion deficit, severe inflation was inevitable. The economic crisis made fiscal responsibility a pertinent issue and Proxmire’s call for responsible spending, along with his warnings about inflation, were echoed by the news media. In a time of economic contraction it was natural that the citizens expected their elected officials to control spending.13

In addition to widespread cynicism toward elected officials and financial issues, men and women’s public and private relationships, including the changing structure of the American family, were popular features of the *Chicago Tribune*. The paper often sensationalized these relationships. In March 1975, several articles addressed prostitution in America, including one in which a “hooker” from Holland argued that she secretly married for love and not to beat immigration laws.14 Two additional articles analyzed teen

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13 “Can Congress Control Itself?” *Chicago Tribune*.

14 “Hooker Tells Secret-She’s Worried,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 22, 1975, Sec. 1, 8.
prostitution: one covered a murdered girl while the other delved into the interpersonal emotions that bind young women to their pimps.

Each of these articles focused upon the woman’s emotions, rather than the crimes committed. The later article explained that “love” was an emotion manipulated by men in order to lead two minors to prostitution.\footnote{“Karen’s Story.” \textit{Chicago Tribune}.} The first girl covered was courted by an older man who pretended to be her boyfriend and convinced her to run away with him to Chicago. Once in the city he then took on the role of pimp, renting her body to other men for sexual services. The second girl covered in the article was a young mother whose pimp kept her from nursing her infant. Repeatedly beaten and forced to work the streets, the young mother refused to press charges. When asked by a vice detective why she would not prosecute her pimp, her response was that she “loved” him. Without explicitly stating it, the subtext of the article asked how “love” bound the abused teen prostitute/mother to her pimp, thus addressing the larger cultural question on the definition of love.

Despite their destructive nature, the romantic feelings both women felt played a large role in their lives. This became the focus of the \textit{Tribune’s} coverage rather than the violence and crimes perpetuated by men. Love could lead to situations and experiences that were anything but rational or sensible to outsiders, and could obviously be manipulated, yet, by focusing on the women’s emotions, the \textit{Tribune} presented a scenario in which the victim was at fault for the crime, not the criminal. Love and attachment may have been a significant aspect of the illegal and dangerous world of prostitution, but the crime was violence and exploitation. Such coverage supported a sensationalized version
of events and made judgments about the ongoing cultural debates between men and women. Women’s emotions were to blame for their condition rather than men’s actions.\footnote{Patricia Leeds, “Teen Prostitutes—Pretty, Broke, Alone,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, March 13, 1975, Sec. 2, 9.}

Despite focusing upon the victim rather than the perpetrator, these articles contributed to the ongoing discussion surrounding men and women’s public and private relationships. Questions included: What was love? What emotions were involved in the protection of an abuser? What should the relationship be between a pimp, a prostitute and her child? A woman (albeit a minor), her child, and a man were all tied together through a conglomeration of emotions and finances, and for better or worse were part of a relationship. Although these articles all failed to ask these important questions they revealed culturally significant debates.\footnote{Ibid.}

A lack of respect for professional women was a common feature of mid-1970s print news coverage. The role of women within education and the workforce was quickly expanding with the implementation of Title IX and the Equal Opportunity in Education Act. Simultaneously, a multitude of workplace discrimination cases made their way through state and federal courts, while the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment was debated all over the country. An article on March 22, 1975 in the \textit{Chicago Tribune} featured Nurse Kristen Hall who was fired over a gender-specific uniform policy. She sued for reinstatement of her job as head nurse, claiming that the “white nurses cap was a nuisance, a hindrance, and part of discriminatory policy.” But the suit was more complicated than a mere uniform squabble, as it reflected a protracted power struggle within the hospital hierarchy involving the freedom, rights, and abilities of female
employees. The nurse was fighting for her job at a renowned medical center in Chicago in the coronary intensive care unit of Northwestern Memorial Hospital. Hall’s position at a prestigious institution provided more than a comfortable salary as she influenced hospital protocol including the uniform policies affecting female employees.¹⁸

**Gender Discrimination in the Chicago Tribune**

Gender discrimination at the workplace was a feature of many articles in the *Chicago Tribune* throughout 1975, but it was common that articles worked to perpetuate sexual stereotypes with “charming” pictures that presented women as objects of physical attraction and their roles within professional settings as ineffectual. Such depictions undermined the importance of women in the workplace and reinforced the barriers that existed between men and women employees. This held true for the case of Nurse Hall. A photograph accompanying the *Chicago Tribune* article, entitled, “Fired Nurse Sues To Get Job Back,” depicted the attractive young nurse glancing to the side with a smirk.

Nurse Hall is presented as a charming woman with a sly grin, not as a competent high-level administrator engaged in a legal dispute. The picture failed to present a professional image of the head nurse. The caption, “Kristen Hall: Cap’s a Hindrance,” further undercut the significance of her previous role managing daily operations at an important institution. The term “hindrance” conveyed the sense that the nurse's hat was a mere inconvenience, whereas “cap” further undercut the importance of the issue because the implication is that the item is something worn by a child or ballplayer. The article does not once address Hall’s responsibilities at the coronary intensive care unit. The

article does give voice to Hall, who asserts that the hat posed a hazard and points out that it was a uniform item not required of men.19

It would seem that Hall’s uniform dispute was much more complicated than the “hindrance” of a single gender-specific uniform policy. A hospital spokesperson said that Hall left voluntarily and that in the interim the uniform item had become optional. There was clearly more to the issue, but the article did not provide additional details. Addressing other gender-specific workplace policy issues or an explanation of why nurse’s hats became optional could have provided valuable context for Hall’s complaint, but were not included in the piece. The article presented the issue as a squabble rather than a serious gender discrimination case that could have far-reaching legal impact.20

Throughout 1975, the Chicago Tribune published several articles each week engaging the Equal Rights Amendment debate. An editorial from April 10, titled “Sex Bias—Not For Women Only,” addressed its potential positive and negative affects.21 The concept that sex discrimination might also affect men was slowly gaining credence. This perspective held that both men and women were constrained by stereotypes, cultural assumptions, and gender specific laws. Chicago Tribune editor Mike LaVelle pointed out how many of the nation’s laws directly discriminated against men. The example he cited on April 10, 1975, was a widower and child whose primary bread winner was the deceased wife and mother. The Department of Welfare granted survivor benefits to the

19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
child, but not to the father, because under social security laws only women were entitled to benefits when their spouse died.

After years in the court system, the case slowly made its way to the Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of extending survivor benefits to the husband and father. In the written decision, Associate Justice Lewis P. Powell, Jr. stated, “When the mother is a principal wage earner, the family may suffer as great an economic deprivation upon her death as would occur upon the death of a father wage earner.” The editorial explained how this sexist policy dated back to the creation of the Social Security Act in the mid-1930s. The editor made it clear that the sexist nature of American society was an integral part of the nation’s laws and institutional policies, and that unless these issues were formally challenged, sexism would continue to persist and adversely affect the lives of both men and women. The editor made an important, yet rarely stated argument, that sex discrimination harmed everyone in society.  

In addition to the public debate over the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, the Chicago Tribune also provided continuous coverage of other debates surrounding changes in the personal and public relationships between men and women. Salient issues involved the role of government in family life and the personal decisions of couples to stay together, separate, or divorce. Men and women’s personal and public lives were the subject of daily coverage. Many pieces such as the editorial “Men Need liberation, Too,” looked at how the pressures of the nationwide financial crisis made it

22 Mike LaVelle, “Sex Bias—Not For Women Only,” Chicago Tribune, April 10, 1975, Sec. 2, 3.
difficult for men to act as “proper fathers” or to fully participate in their marriages. The article addressed the financial and social conditions that forced many men to work long hours at careers that often limited their personal and professional growth. It argued that men needed time and space in order to be good fathers to their children and that it is no wonder that “marriages come apart” when in their early years husbands and wives are separated for all but a few moments at the beginning and end of the day. The article called the national work ethic expected of men “sexist.” According to the accepted ethos men were expected to devote themselves completely to their careers, but sound evidence showed that working more than eight hours per day or forty hours per week actually harmed productivity and morale. The article clarified the disconnect between American cultural values regarding work and what was scientifically understood regarding quality of life and productivity issues.24

Covering “Family” and “Love”

The emotional aspects of heterosexual relationships were also a common topic among Chicago Tribune articles. The front page of March 28, 1975 detailed the emotions of a couple who stayed together in the wake of a traumatic experience. “Love” was often featured as an explanation by the Tribune to explain a variety of issues. In the interview with the wife, she explained how her husband’s criminal conviction effected their marriage. Following a lengthy trial, the husband was sentenced to a year in a county work-release program and then to an additional five years of probation for plotting to kill his wife. Despite the conviction, the wife and mother of three said, “I love him, I believe in him, and I will never leave him.” Her husband insisted the plot to kill her was actually

a practical joke. The article centered around the family home, while few facts pertinent to
the husband’s alleged plot to kill his wife were provided. The article included very few
explanations about the legal process, court case, or the guilty verdict; rather, it was
dominated by how the wife felt and subjective observations by the journalist. The result
was a story that read more like fictional drama than a news article. The question lingered,
“How was the husband convicted of plotting murder if it was simply a misunderstood
prank?” The journalist did not explore this outstanding question and failed to engage
seriously other possible issues that may have included emotional abuse and financial
dependency.25

The pictures included in this article present the family as a happy, solid American
family. It described their “big brick colonial house worth $130,000,” two-car garage,
Chevy wagon, three bikes, children’s playhouse, barbecue grill, children ages twelve, ten,
and four, along with their collection of pets that included a Shetland sheepdog, two
hamsters, turtles, canaries, and fish. The last paragraph on the front page begins, “There
is a lot of warmth in this house. It is a close family. You can feel it.” While another
paragraph states:

Now, the slightly plump, long-haired suburban housewife is trying to put
everything back together again after the long ordeal of the trial and conviction of
her husband, Michael, thirty-five, for plotting to kill her. The plot, he insisted,
was a practical joke.26

The article undermined the seriousness of the conviction by focusing attention on the
family’s material possessions and the wife’s appearance. Her appearance is reinforced by

25 Carol Kleiman, “‘I Love Him, Will Never Leave’—Joker’s Wife,” Chicago Tribune, March 28, 1975,
Sec. 1: 1, 8.
26 Ibid.
the front page photograph in which the wife is well dressed and comfortably lounging on a sofa within the spacious yet family-oriented living-room. Some of the grittier details are revealed when the article continues on page eight, including the husband’s long-term affair that led to the wife’s own infidelity. She stated, “I knew about it for about two years. It hurt me deeply.” The article concludes with the wife optimistically stating that because of the trial and past difficulties they “have become very close. Closer than ever before. Can you believe that—after twenty years—closer than ever before?”

The reporter, Carol Kleiman, focused on emotions rather than events, appearances rather than legal facts, and she decentered the seriousness of the trial, conviction, and adultery in favor of the wife’s emotional state, the appearance of the family, and how the woman believed that her husband was only joking. Oddly, the reporter failed to ask how the wife could believe her husband was only joking when a jury determined that beyond a reasonable doubt the husband plotted murder. How exactly does a couple weather affairs, a legal trial and murder plot conviction, then end up closer than before? There are many unanswered questions, but the front page article reveals a newspaper and culture engrossed with men and women’s relationships.

A week after “’I Love Him, Will Never Leave’—Joker’s Wife” appeared, an editorial covered how federal laws impacted the decision to get married. The nation’s tax laws discriminated against married couples and un-wed working couples who lived together potentially saved thousands on their income taxes. The editorial also linked recent tax law changes to the male-dominated Congress, calling congressmen “out of

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
touch with the real world of working wives and working couples.”

This particular tax policy was very unpopular with conservatives, for they interpreted it as a government policy that encouraged couples to remain un-married. Financial policy had the ability to encourage and discourage behavior, and to reinforce ideological divides.

The news coverage of the *Chicago Tribune* regularly addressed the government’s impact upon personal choices and family life. A letter to the editor published on April 8, 1975 spoke of the entire nation being one large family, and that the American government should act as a responsible parent by providing foster care to many of its citizens. Since the Great Depression, Americans had debated the balance between individual responsibility and government assistance. The so-called “welfare state” was an ongoing controversy, but the Social Security Act of 1935 and amendments such as the Social Security Amendments of 1965 (which included Medicare and Medicaid) made it clear that by the 1970s, most Americans accepted in one form or another that their government would assume a responsibility for the basic needs of its most destitute citizens.

Along with public policy, a changing vocabulary concerned some citizens. An April 6 letter to the editor entitled “Love or Sex” sought to make a distinction between the appropriate use of the terms used to describe intercourse. The author requested that “love-making” be reserved for sex by committed married couples, while “lusting” or some other term be used when describing sex among non-married couples. This author

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saw sex within marriage as different from sex outside of marriage, and was expressing concern about the ongoing sexual revolution.

In the spring of 1975 the Chicago Tribune--usually conservative--presented an dissonant view of the the debates between men and women. Its news coverage was prone to reinforcing gender stereotypes and sensationalizing crime by focusing on the victim rather than the perpetrator, but at the same time it published some of the more progressive editorials that recognized that equal rights were necessary to the quality of life for both men and women.

**Covering Love and Sex Research**

The Chicago Tribune covered Senator Proxmire’s attacks of National Science Foundation supported research projects. On Wednesday, March 12, 1975, the day the press release was issued for the first Golden Fleece Award, the editorial board published “Uncle Sam and the Facts of Life,” which addressed a Michigan State University’s study of student sexual practices along with Hatfield and Berscheid’s research. The first study surveyed the intimate relationships of 1,200 college students through the campus health center. Designed to better understand the sexual practices of college students, the study assessed their social practices and sought to address student health needs. Critiquing both projects, the editorial board mimicked Proxmire’s press release and attacked Hatfield and Berscheid for their “love” research. However, the article did not engage any specifics of the research project. The editorial mockingly asked about love, “What’s left to find out?” and challenged the grant allocation process by the National Science Foundation, echoing criticisms made by Proxmire in January that asked, “Why should a prize project like this
be awarded without competition?” The editors also supported Proxmire’s general stance that grants exploring human relationships were an inappropriate use of federal funds.31

Despite their many criticisms, the editors surprisingly conceded that an understanding of relationships was important. They believed, however, that sufficient research had already been conducted through “books, movies, magazine confessions, advice columns, and the people you overhear in the bar.” They concluded that if the study could somehow be the “last word on the subject… [then] $342,378 would be a bargain price.” The editors had mistakenly cited the cost of the Michigan study, rather than Hatfield and Berscheid’s, but more significant was their contradictory arguments. They considered the research both a waste of money and valuable. The editors did not believe that definitive answers could be found and thus a study of human sexual practices was an inappropriate expenditure of federal funds, yet they recognized that a better understanding of interpersonal relationships was needed.32

There was cognitive dissonance in the editors’ arguments that expressed incongruities between what was known, what they thought could realistically be understood, and what they wanted to know about romantic love. Such confusion reflected the widespread uncertainty about what could be known about love. Love may lead to confusing interactions--for example the prostitute who refused to press charges against her abusive pimp--and most did not think that love could be clearly understood, yet also hoped for more knowledge of the emotion.

32 Ibid.
Like the editors, many newspaper readers were also critical of “love” research. On Sunday, March 16, 1975, the *Chicago Tribune* printed the *New York Times* piece published on the previous Friday by James Reston, which provided staunch support for love research. A week later on Sunday, March 23, a letter to the editor entitled “$342,000 Sex Study” reiterated Proxmire’s criticisms of the Michigan State University’s study of student sexual practices. The female author challenged the funds spent on premarital sex research as “an extravagant waste of taxpayer money!” Emotions ran high as the author linked the subject matter of the research with other perceived social ills such as drug and alcohol abuse, fatherless children, and venereal diseases. She conveyed fiscally and socially conservative views by claiming that social service funding to aid these problems was allocated to irresponsible youth. As a self-described overburdened taxpayer who acknowledged widespread social problems, the author felt that “the old-fashioned paddle would be cheaper and one heckuva lot more effective!” Research of sex habits was clearly controversial and could spark heated emotions.

Supporting Proxmire’s position, the author called for an immediate halt to program funding. She rejected the research on moral grounds and on the need to utilize public funds for more pressing issues. These charged statements reflected not only financial concerns but the impact of fiscal policy on social issues. It was a common conservative position to point to the disintegration of the family as the root of countless other social problems and to reject government support for and/or involvement with non-married sexually active couples. Whereas liberals, such as Reston, criticized these socially conservative positions stating that they failed to engage the dynamics of
changing family life and often conflated the causes and effects of large-scale social changes. Divorce rates, women entering the workforce, substance abuse, and recession were not caused by family disintegration, according to liberal thought, but were caused by a variety of interrelated factors.33

The editorial staff at the Chicago Tribune responded a few weeks later to Reston’s piece with the jab, “‘Romantic love, my foot!’” The editorial restated Proxmire’s reply to Reston as published in The New York Times on Sunday March 23. It supported Proxmire’s stand against the National Science Foundation’s grant to study romantic love, but again mistakenly stated its amount, this time saying that it was for $133,400. It is unlikely that the editorial board of the Chicago Tribune confused the Michigan State University study with Berscheid and Hatfield’s study since both were cited in the original March 12 editorial. The former study was for $342,000, and the latter was for $84,000. It is unclear where the $133,400 figure came from; however, both grants under attack were minor congressional expenditures, but the editors voiced their gratitude “even for small things,” expressing their support for any financial responsibility exhibited by the government. The editors, along with many other Americans, were skeptical that the federal government could make sound appropriations.34

In an attempt to prove to the public the uselessness of such research, the editorial also quoted Hatfield and Berscheid’s full grant synopsis which had been included by Proxmire in his response to Reston. The research proposal utilized many social science specific terms and proved inaccessible to a lay audience. The editors used these facts to

34 “‘Romantic love, my foot!’” Editorial, Chicago Tribune, March 31, 1975, Sec. 2: 2.
argue that the research had no apparent connection to romantic love, the issue of divorce, or America’s social problems. The editorial board concluded by reinforcing the lack of clarity or purpose in the summary provided by the researchers, stating, “If this is the language of romantic love, it’s a wonder that anybody in the country is still married.” The Chicago Tribune piece did not assess whether the research under question was deemed appropriate by other professionals in the field, or if the scientists’ previous research had made significant contributions to their field; rather, the editorial reinforced Proxmire’s criticisms and snidely undermined the validity of the research.35

The Chicago Tribune presented a lively debate, but it did not give voice to the female researchers. Nor did it examine the details and complexity necessary to determine the validity of a scientific research project. This lack of sophistication paralleled the paper’s coverage of a murdered teen prostitute, which focused on the victim rather than the criminal, and the husband convicted of plotting to murder his wife, which focused on the wife’s emotions instead of the husband’s crime. The Tribune focused on Proxmire’s criticisms rather than the defense by those who were attacked. The paper’s coverage of issues involving men and women’s personal and public issues failed to provide a thorough treatment of the issues from all perspectives, often sensationalized the victim rather than the criminal and displayed a decidedly conservative stance towards love research funded by the federal government.

The Capital Times: “Wisconsin’s Progressive Newspaper”

Self-described as “Wisconsin’s progressive newspaper,” The Capital Times provided coverage of a broad base of current issues rooted in the social and political

35 Ibid.
climate of 1975. Daily articles announced women’s meetings, discussed human sexuality, addressed the legal progress of women’s rights, and delved into the legality of a sexual service massage parlors in the Madison area. The high volume of articles covering men and women’s public and private lives may have intended to attract reader attention, but the coverage did not exhibit the same sexist and sensationalist nature exhibited by the Chicago Tribune. This was especially true of the paper’s coverage of rape and other violent crimes and of the first Golden Fleece Award. The Capital Times examined the details of the research, as well as its implications upon large-scale social issues while providing a sophisticated discussion that allowed both sides to present their positions.36

Based in Madison, The Capital Times provided comprehensive coverage of their Senator’s activities along with the multitude of events and debates about issues involving the roles, rights, and responsibilities of men and women. In 1975, Proxmire appeared in a total of 227 news articles.37 A brief look at the paper’s history proves informative about Wisconsin’s unconventional political climate, which was also one of the reasons why William Proxmire moved to Madison as a political reporter in 1949 at the age of thirty-four. Reflecting its progressive and non-conformist roots, the paper was originally founded in order to support a Wisconsin politician who opposed American involvement

in World War I. At the time a Republican senator, Robert La Follette (Wisconsin Governor 1901–1906 and Senator 1906–1925), was harshly criticized by the state’s leading newspaper at the time, the *Wisconsin State Journal* (first published in 1839 as *The Madison Express*).\(^{38}\) Senator La Follette’s career and the debate that inspired the creation of *The Capital Times* provides further insights into Wisconsin’s unpredictable political climate.

La Follette created the "Progressive" faction inside the Republican Party of Wisconsin around 1900 and attempted to create a national Progressive Party in 1912. La Follette’s mission was to control the trusts and to give political control back to the people with a direct primary and progressive income tax reforms.\(^{39}\) Wisconsin’s Progressive movement mobilized many—the business people, professionals, and intellectuals—against the industrial monopolies that they believed to be the barrier between the people and their government.\(^{40}\) In 1924, under his Progressive Party, La Follette ran nationally for the presidency, garnering 16.5 percent of the popular vote, but only winning his home state of Wisconsin.\(^{41}\) Even this was an accomplishment and testament to Wisconsin’s undulating political tide, for only a few years earlier—in response to his vocal opposition to World War I—the Wisconsin state legislature asked the United States Senate to expel La Follette for sedition.\(^{42}\) Wisconsin’s political landscape was very unpredictable and thus provided an opportunity for a newcomer: Proxmire.


\(^{40}\) Sykes, *Proxmire*, 36.

\(^{41}\) Fowler, *Wisconsin Votes*, 131.

\(^{42}\) Sykes, *Proxmire*, 36.
When Proxmire was hired by *The Capital Times* in 1949, it was the leading Progressive paper in Wisconsin and continued to hold that title throughout his political career. Examining the paper’s coverage during the debate surrounding the first Golden Fleece award in 1975 reveals a liberal news agency deeply committed to voicing the concerns of Wisconsin residents. The paper shied away from flashy and superficial coverage of catastrophes and accidents that were more common features of papers like the *Chicago Tribune*.

**In-Depth Reporting vs. Sensationalism**

In January 1975, *The Capital Times* featured two bank robberies on the front-page. Both provided clear and detailed accounts of the crimes, including descriptions of the assailants that included height, weight, and hair color. The January 5 piece, titled “City Robberies,” takes the time to explain how bystanders and victims of the robbery took action and were responsible for the apprehension of the criminals.\(^{43}\) Although the paper featured another robbery on the front page later in January, it presented both in factual terms and reinforced the value of the community members and law enforcement officials. The articles supported the concept of a community working together to stop crime and apprehend criminals. This stood in stark contrast to the sensational coverage of the *Chicago Tribune*, where coverage of bank robberies reinforced a violent and out of control world view.\(^{44}\)

Robberies, accidents, and other natural and human catastrophes accounted for a very small fraction of articles in *The Capital Times* in 1975. The vast majority of articles


provide thoughtful investigations into social, political, and economic issues as well as in-depth reflections on historical trends by respected scholars such as Gary Wills.\footnote{Pulitzer Prize for \textit{Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America} (1993), and author of nearly forty books. Gary Wills, “Will America Ever Learn its Lesson About Indochina?” \textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] March 20, 1975, 40. “3 Immigrant Families Enrich American Life,” \textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] January 3, 1975, 21. Also see article covering Tom Paine: Coleman McCarthy, “A New Look at an Old Patriot,” \textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] March 3, 1975, 17.} In addition to balanced journalism and historically reflective pieces, it was common for the paper to cover issues that were not breaking news, but nonetheless important to contemporary American life.

A series titled “Sex and the Preschool Child” ran four segments exploring the sexuality of small children by presenting up-to-date research teaching parents how children learn about and explore their sexuality. The series was intended to help parents understand the curiosities of their child, as the first piece in early January 1975 states: “[P]arents are naturally confused. We simply don’t know what behavior is healthy.” The article identifies the tension between older cultural taboos that restricted sexual pleasure and the contemporary sexualized media that touted the ethos of “a good sex life.”\footnote{Joanne Koch, “Sex and the Preschool Child: Child’s Sex Curiosity May Horrify Parents, but is Natural,” \textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] January 13, 1975, 23.} Consulting with educators, psychiatrists, and authors in the field of child guidance, the author provided in-depth information for parents wanting to raise their children utilizing the most up-to-date scientific research. The series ran for four consecutive days and concluded with an article entitled “How to Recognize the Danger Signals,” which provided an overview of activities within the range of “normal” behavior, and detailing what actions may be unhealthy and lead to larger problems in a child’s future. The series spoke to the meaningful engagement with contemporary issues printed daily by \textit{The}}
Capital Times. The exposé coincided with the contentious debate regarding the legality of massage parlors in Madison.\textsuperscript{47} Issues involving human sexuality, especially the intimate interactions between men and women were hot topics in the 1970s.

\textit{The Capital Times} and the \textit{Chicago Tribune} addressed the renegotiation of men and women’s relationships with coverage that was as distinct as their coverage of bank robberies. \textit{The Capital Times} provided detailed discussions from many sides of an issue, whereas the \textit{Chicago Tribune} tended to highlight one side of a story, such as the particulars of a crime, an interpersonal drama, or addressing only the victim instead of the perpetrator. An outstanding example is in the coverage by \textit{The Capital Times} of the murdered teen prostitute covered by the \textit{Chicago Tribune}. The Madison-based paper ran a single story on page fifteen without photos entitled, “Baker Held in Slaying of 15-Year-Old Prostitute.” Whereas the \textit{Chicago Tribune} ran several front-page articles, one featuring a mug shot of the murdered girl and the title, “Karen’s Story: Tragic Ending to Brief Life.” \textit{The Capital Times} piece focused on the assailant and his arrest, whereas the \textit{Chicago Tribune} article focused on the life of the victim, turning her broken home and seduction by an older man into a dramatic if not outright cautionary narrative of a wayward youth. From the perspective of the \textit{Chicago Tribune}, the murdered girl’s story was what led to the tragic ending, not the criminal who murdered her. This type of coverage shifted the focus of the crime onto the victim rather than the criminal.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 38.
Man and Women’s Concerns: The Sexual Revolution

Thoughtful articles covering health, education, the environment, economic issues, and the government provided the bulk of material for The Capital Times, and stories that featured the debates surrounding men and women’s public and private were also daily features. Surveying articles from January 1975 reveal dozens of articles centered around the renegotiation of men and women’s roles. There were daily announcements for meetings, organizations and other forums where women could meet and discuss issues such as employment, reproductive health and rights, and a shared oppression. And daily news articles addressed these same concerns.49

There was a concerted effort on the part of The Capital Times to address human sexuality and the renegotiation of men and women’s relationships through editorials, in-depth investigative articles by staff, advertising, and with articles sourced from the Associated Press wire service. In January, the article “Birth Control Pills Are Seized by FDA,” sat above a classified ad touting in bold capital print: “EXOTIC MASSAGES.”50 Albeit mildly cloaked, the advertisement ran daily, along with many other ads offering sexual services. The Capital Times offered both news and advertising space for the sexual revolution.

A visible example of the dialogue between sexual progressives and social conservatives within the Madison community was engaged in the debate over the legal

status of massage parlors. In early 1975, massage parlors were legal establishments but there was a strong push by church leaders to ban them by placing the issue before the city council, or subject them to referendum vote by city residents. The issue raged for months and articles covering the debate were front-page news until April 1, when Madison residents voted to license massage parlors and ban sexual massages.\footnote{Frank Custer, “Did All City Massage Parlors Close Up at Midnight?” \textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] April 15, 1975, 1.} In the months leading up to the decision, experts and community leaders provided opinions in lengthy articles that often spanned multiple pages. Exposés by investigative journalists provided first-hand accounts of the services and lifestyles of the women, while countless letters to the editors discussed all aspects of the issue.\footnote{For an investigative journalist account see: “There is more than one side to a massage,” \textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] February 6, 1975, 12. For letters to the editor see: Jay P. Keepman, M.D. “Nick Opposed To Massage Parlors,” \textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] March 28, 1975, 28. Disch, “Disch Says Massages Shouldn’t Be an Issue,” \textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] March 5, 1975, 56. Elizabeth Bardwell, “Bardwell Attacks ’Purveyors of Vice,” \textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] March 22, 1975, 15. For expert opinions see: Ann Beckmann, “Local sex therapists talk about massage parlors,” \textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] March 11, 1975, 9. For a front page article covering public request for vote see: Frank Custer, “9,000 Signers Want Massage Parlor Vote,” \textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] February 10, 1975, 1.}

**Covering Senator Proxmire**

The regulation of massage parlors was a city government issue. Thus, Senator Proxmire, a federal representative, was not involved in the debate. However, the policies and activities of Senator Proxmire were often debated in the pages of \textit{The Capital Times}. Proxmire’s involvement in local political issues remained limited, but many federal policies had a local impact. Keeping in line with his long-standing reputation, Proxmire’s charge to keep the federal government fiscally responsible garnered regular coverage by \textit{The Capital Times}. Proxmire’s first appearance in 1975 was on January 2, in the article “Proxmire to Seek Limousine Limit.” The Senator announced that he would introduce
legislation to reduce the number of federal officials entitled to chauffer-driven limousines from about 800 to 27. The fiscal accountability of the federal government and its officials was a common topic within The Capital Times and the limousine issue appeared twice in the weeks following Proxmire’s proposed limit on limousine service. The first follow-up article on January 25, titled “Congress: America’s Most Privileged Class,” featured a large political cartoon of a luxury car whisked to Congressional parking, and was subtitled, “Chauffeured Limousines.” It was followed by a lengthy editorial two weeks later, “The Chauffeuring and Nursing of Congress,” which explored the many chores that members of Congress expect of their staff, including chauffeuring. At a time when distrust of public officials was at an all-time high, Proxmire used his skill to publicize issues by tapping into this concern of his constituents and garnering a steady stream of mostly positive local publicity.

The same day the “Proxmire to Seek Limousine Limit” article was published, another featured Proxmire’s fiscal conservatism, “Prox: Federal Grants Haven’t Slowed Crime.” In it Proxmire takes aim at $3.5 billion spent by the U.S. Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA). Madison’s chief of police stated in the article that the LEAA funds were commonly used to fulfill the annual operating budgets of local departments, paying for necessary hardware rather than to improving law enforcement services as intended. Proxmire was very involved in his community’s concerns and although a federal representative, he engaged many national issues from this local

perspective.\textsuperscript{56} Printed between “Birth Control Pills Are Seized by FDA” and the previously mentioned “EXOTIC MASSAGES” advertisement, Proxmire claimed that these federal grants “had not been much help in stemming crime.” However, the article lacked concrete facts or statistics to support his claim.

Proxmire’s penchant for publicity did not go unnoticed and annoyed some of his constituents. One reader wrote a critical letter to the editor of \textit{The Capital Times} that was published the day of the LEAA crime grants piece. The unsigned letter accusingly asked about a photo of Proxmire tending to the poor at the Salvation Army on Christmas day. The author of the letter asked, “What happened to the ‘news behind the news?’” The paper explained how the photograph was an Associated Press picture taken by a Milwaukee paper and conceded, “\textit{The Capital Times} should have checked whether the picture was a political gimmick before using it.”\textsuperscript{57} While the majority of the articles covering Proxmire were positive, the paper did not shy away from criticizing him directly or publishing letters from constituents unhappy with his performance in office.\textsuperscript{58}

In his fifteen plus years of federal service, the Wisconsin Senator was at the center of many national debates, even pointed to as contributing to the fall of South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{59} On January 21, Proxmire appeared in a head-shot photo and article on the

second page asking, “Did Proxmire Cause Fall of Phouc Binh? Conservative Washington Columnist Thinks So.” The article is about *Washington Star News* columnist, Smith Hempstone, who attacked Senator Proxmire for cutting in half the $1.45 billion request for military aid to Thieu’s regime in South Vietnam, thus leaving the South Vietnamese ill-equipped to push back northern attacks and eventually leading to the fall of South Vietnam. The article was another example of *The Capital Times* offering detailed responses from both sides of an issues. It presents the refutation of Hempstone’s claim from a legislative assistant in Proxmire’s office, who stated that funding was cut in half by the House of Representatives down to $650 million, and when it reached the Senate Appropriations Committee, upon which Proxmire sat, the Wisconsin senator argued for a further reduction of $90 million. This appeal to reduce the amount was defeated by the Senate and an appropriation of $700 million was eventually approved by the full Senate. Proxmire’s aide concluded, “None of this had any relationship to the fall of Phoc Binh, and there is no evidence that it had anything to do with the outcome of any battle in South Vietnam at anytime.”

**Controversy in Wisconsin**

Another charged issue involving Proxmire was a $37.8 million federally funded flood control and recreation project located in Southwest Wisconsin. Initially opposed to funding the “LaFarge Dam Project” throughout 1974, Proxmire changed his position in early 1975 due to vocal support by the area’s residents. The project had approximately twenty local supporters for each dissenter. Proxmire justified this change by stating that

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60 Ibid.
“You have to be impressed by the strong and unified support.”\(^{61}\) Although it may have appeared that Proxmire caved in to public support, an aide in Proxmire’s office clarified his position by asserting that the senator did not fully support the project, rather he simply no longer opposed it. This aide also stated that since some fourteen million dollars had already been sunk into the project, it was increasingly difficult to justify canceling it. This was a rare example of Proxmire shifting his position due to outside pressure.\(^{62}\)

Wisconsin constituents were quick to notice that Proxmire’s position had changed and one critic told a reporter, “He’s after every vote in the state.”\(^{63}\) Proxmire’s shift was criticized as the result of political calculation. The issue was taken up the following day by the editorial board in the article, “Inconsistency, Thy Name is Prox,” which called the LaFarge Dam Project another financial boondoggle that would create yet another lake that would soon be choked with weeds and algae, noting that there were hundreds of lakes that the state was currently “paying through the nose to clean up.” This argument formed the basis for Proxmire’s initial opposition to the project. The editors concluded that Proxmire would need to gain votes for his 1976 re-election, and thus the Senator was quick to follow his voters.\(^{64}\) In hindsight, and considering that he won with sixty-five percent of the popular vote in 1976, it is unlikely that the area’s small population had much effect on Proxmire’s 1976 re-election, but this and other constituents letters revealed a paper that did not shy away from controversy or from criticizing Proxmire.\(^{65}\)

\(^{62}\) Ibid.
\(^{63}\) Ibid.
While Proxmire enjoyed overwhelming popular support in the polls, this particular issue proved very controversial in Wisconsin. Many examples of angry letters were published in *The Capital Times*, including one that referred to the paper as the ‘Crap-Times,’ attacking the paper’s “crucifixion” of Governor Lucy for supporting the project four years earlier. Following several well-articulated arguments, the author concluded with, “don’t get mad, “Crap-Times” Bug Off.” The editors accompanied the letter with a response that provided point-by-point retorts and in their final analysis, judged Proxmire’s shift in position as a political move intended to gain votes.66 Two more letters were published the same day questioning Proxmire’s shift, stating that the project’s funds would have been better spent on projects that protected the environment because building the dam would cause algae to slowly choke the river and eventually destroy the natural environment of the Kickapoo Valley.67 This was just one of many environmental concerns featured in *The Capital Times*. Local and national environmental issues were common issues and featured weekly, if not daily.68

**Proxmire’s Stance on “Love” and “Sex” Research**

On March 5, the front-page article “Expensive Sex Survey Aroused Proxmire,” featured a head-shot of the senator. The title, like many news articles covering Proxmire’s criticisms of government-funded relationship science, used words that piqued readers’ obsession with intimate relationships. The article was a reprint of the *Associated


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Press piece that covered Proxmire’s attack on the Michigan State University’s $342,000 study investigating the sexual practices of college students. The study was funded by taxpayer funds supplied to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Proxmire’s criticisms included the fact that the study was awarded on a non-competitive basis, was granted $99,761 more than requested, and that it, “raises serious questions concerning the invasion of privacy, [and] also appears to be a waste of taxpayers’ money.” Irresponsible federal spending was the thrust behind Proxmire’s critiques of many research projects, but this time his critique had none of the levity and humor that characterized the vast majority of his press releases. Instead it carried the weight of moral condemnation. Characteristic of The Capital Times, the article provided both sides of the story. Professor David J. Kallen said that Proxmire had distorted the facts, that participation in the study was voluntary, safely collected through the student health center, and that all information was strictly confidential. 69

Along with the article “Expensive Sex Survey Arouses Proxmire,” two additional articles in The Capital Times on March 5 addressed debates surrounding intercourse. One was an editorial covering the recent Supreme Court ruling that nullified several state laws, including one in Wisconsin, that prohibited the identification of rape victims in the press. The editorial, “Rape and Freedom of the Press,” focused on the privacy and free speech issues within the news coverage of rape. 70 The second article, “Women’s Day activities announced,” outlined session topics that included rape, abortion, health, and feminism. 71 Taken together, the three pieces entered the public debates surrounding

sexual practises, including public information about and discussions of sex, along with how the nation’s laws were addressing forced sex as a crime. Changing sexual practices and consciousness ushered in by the ongoing sexual revolution were controversial, especially when it came to determining what role the government would play in making laws, enforcing judicial rulings, and providing funding for programs that investigated sexual issues.

The coverage of these discussions of sexual practices, privacy, and the role of government continued the following week. *The Capital Times* on March 10, included articles covering a feminist group fighting media prejudice and an upcoming seminar looking at how state budget cuts would impact women in academia.72 On March 11, the lengthy article, “Local Sex Therapists Talk About Massage Parlors,” continued the debate surrounding the massage parlors in Madison. A thoughtful letter to the editor published the same day addressed the recent U.S. Supreme Court rape decision.73 The author urged the publisher to think twice before printing the identity of rape victims due to the public stigma attached to victims of sexual crimes and warned that printing the names of rape victims would make it more likely that the perpetrators of the crime went unpunished, as the victims would be reluctant to come forward.74

Proxmire’s political attack on Hatfield and Berscheid’s $84,000 National Science Foundation grant to investigate love on Tuesday March 11, was not initially covered by *The Capital Times*. However, page three on Monday, March 17, “UW ‘Love’ Research

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Next Proxmire ‘Victim,’” featured Hatfield and Berscheid as another casualty of Proxmire’s “endless campaign against government waste.” He targeted the researchers’ award of a four-year $255,900 NSF grant to study the dynamics involved within intimate relationships. In the article, Hatfield described her research into “equity theory” as suggesting that “when people put a lot into a relationship, they expect to get a lot out of it.” She affirmed that her research was worthwhile, “even if it does nothing more than help satisfy intellectual curiosity.” By not simply focusing on Proxmire’s criticisms, by referring to the researchers as “victims,” and by giving voice to the researchers, the article was characteristic of the Capital Times’ balanced news coverage.

A defense of the research was the focus of an article the following day. Titled “Prof Says Proxmire Is Wrong About Study,” it featured an interview with Hatfield. Defending her research, Hatfield began by clarifying how Proxmire’s depiction of their work as “love” or “sex” research was incorrect. She explained how their research involved all types of “intimate relationships,” specifically those relationships featuring warm loving bonds between parent and child, husband and wife, and friend and friend.

More specifically, Hatfield stated how “equity theory” within the field of social psychology attempts to find out what happens when a party in a relationship feels he or she is getting less out of the deal than he or she is putting in. Hatfield explained how her research also focused on understanding equity theory within relationships between employers and employees, philanthropists and recipients, and partners in intimate relationships. Hatfield clarified that equity theory may be applied to romantic

75 Elaine Hatfield’s married name “Walster” was printed in the article.
relationships, “When something happens to upset that balance—if a beautiful person is disfigured or a wealthy person loses a job—the relationship is upset.” According to the theory, a balance has to be set in establishing even a marriage relationship. In the interview, Hatfield’s professional research was unambiguously tied to the men and women’s interpersonal issues.

Hatfield believed that her research had the potential to help understand why marriages break up when the equity balance tipped in favor of one of the partners. She stated how as research further clarifies understanding of the theory, that a more comprehensive understanding of divorce could take shape. In the interview, Hatfield provides that given time her research could help understanding the sharp increase of divorce in America.77 Hatfield’s interview was followed up with a personal thank you letter to The Capital Times that was published on April 2. Hatfield applauded her interviewer’s ability to present the complicated research with clarity and accuracy.78

Context for the First Golden Fleece Award: Sexism in the Media

Although conscious of sexism in the media and very progressive in its choice of topics and providing balanced coverage, The Capital Times still exhibited certain sexist elements. In the midst of the love research debate, addressing sexism was central to its news content. On Friday March 14, “Sexism in Ads Has Many Dimensions,” was the by-line for coverage of a luncheon hosted by the local professional chapter of Women in Communications. It featured a lecture by a female communications researcher and

graduate student from Stanford University. The lecturer discussed the “consciousness scale” developed at Stanford that provided a sophisticated way to “determine how women are presented in ads and to point out explicit reasons why some ads have been termed sexist.” The article explained how the consciousness scale classifies ads from level one—showing women as sex objects—to level five where men and women are depicted as equals. The article also provided a picture of a roadside “Black Velvet Whiskey” billboard depicting a women posing horizontally in a black velvet dress with the phrase “Want a touch of Black Velvet?” as an example of sexist advertising at a level one.\footnote{Ann Beckmann, “Sexism in Ads has Many Dimensions,” \textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] March 14, 1975, 39.}

Uncovering the exploitation of women was increasingly present in media coverage. However, readers needed only to flip through the pages of \textit{The Capital Times} to find many more examples of level-one ads. For example, daily advertisements for massage parlors, nude photography, and pornographic films all featured drawings or pictures of women as sexual objects. A larger ad from a more mainstream advertiser that was featured daily included a photo of a bikini-clad woman taken from behind promoting a chain of fitness clubs. With the caption, “In June, you’ll be glad you joined the Health Club in March—That’s hindsight,” the fitness club’s advertisement used a woman’s body to grab attention along with a word pun to sell what a gym membership ostensibly offers: a shapely buttocks.\footnote{\textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] 22 Mar. 1975, p. 17. This advertisement can be found in numerous other issues throughout March 1975.}

Changing roles for women in the university were also debated and represented a continuous aspect of \textit{The Capital Times’} coverage. Examples following the coverage of
the Golden Fleece Award included “College Week for Women” on March 22, that announced the anticipated attendance of more than one thousand women from seventy countries and twenty other states at the University of Wisconsin Madison in early June.81 On March 28, a page two article entitled, “Two Day Sexuality Conference Set Here for April 24-25” outlined the events and announced that a professor and director of the marriage and family counseling program at Syracuse University would be the main speaker at the conference.82 And a final announcement declared, “‘Women’s Day’ is sellout,” stated that another upcoming University of Wisconsin Madison event was projected to be overflowing with participants. Thousands of women were gathering at the University of Wisconsin Madison to attend a variety of activities.83

Amid the coverage in The Capital Times of women’s conferences and events in Madison, two articles addressed women’s athletic lives on university campuses in other states. A lengthy article covered the recent hiring of a husband and wife coaching team at the University of Redlands and their novel approach combining male and female track athletes for workouts.84 Mixing of the sexes for training purposes was virtually unheard of and thus a newsworthy development in college athletics. The second article covered a discrimination decision by the national Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). Title IX, the Equal Opportunity in Education Act, according to the HEW ruling, applied to all athletic programs, even those without federal support. Seeking to address the disparity between men’s and women’s athletic programs at all educational levels, the

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ruling held all private and public programs accountable to the new law. This reflected a significant change in how sports funding would be allocated and in turn the athletic opportunities available to women.\textsuperscript{85}

**Other Attacks on Science Grants by Proxmire**

On Saturday, March 15, Proxmire was featured as a harsh critic of yet another National Science Foundation grant. This time he challenged the efficacy of $1.125 million grant to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Innovation Center. The five-year grant was designed to support student innovations and allowed recipients to maintain personal ownership over their work, including potential future profits. The personal profit aspect irked Proxmire’s fiscal conservatism and led him to declare that the MIT Center should be self-sustaining and ineligible for further National Science Foundation money. Proxmire employed his usual method of criticism by undermining the legitimacy of the entire program by pointing to ostensibly useless aspects of programs, such as the invention of a banana peeling machine. The Dean for MIT’s School of Engineering responded that the senator did not understand the operation of the center where the focus was to facilitate teaching research and development, not the development of products. Apparently there was a gap between Proxmire’s interpretation of the funding and its purpose as applied by MIT.\textsuperscript{86}

As Proxmire publicly challenged research grants that helped support academic programs, the University of Wisconsin system faced significant fiscal pressures. An article on March 19, covered arguments by the university president about how the


governor’s proposed budget cuts would compromise the institution’s capacity to educate its students. Among other cuts, the budget sought to increase fees for graduate students, who many saw as at the core of the University’s reputation and life-line to outside funding. State Representative Marjorie Miller (D-Madison) weighed in on the issue and stated that good graduate students were critical to retaining good faculty and the overall well-being of the university system. Miller predicted a drop in the quality of graduate students, which in turn would lead to the loss of eminent faculty members, and thus impact outside funding. She believed that with fewer well-qualified graduate students “less federal and private funds would be provided to Wisconsin.”87 This is just one of many example of articles published throughout 1975 that highlighted the fiscal pressures exerted on Wisconsin’s premier academic institution.88 Publicly funded, the university system in Wisconsin was one of the state’s leading economic generators and tampering with its budget proved very controversial.89

On March 20, a critique of Proxmire’s recent attacks on scientific research appeared. “Hello Wisconsin” provided a daily summary of state issues on the front page and inside the front cover. The March 20 piece acknowledged the scientific funding controversies, especially those pertaining to relationships, and warned Proxmire not to get caught up in the “game of the Know Nothings.” This referenced Proxmire’s apparent wish not to want to know how or why men and women fell in love and also referenced

the nativist political movement from the 1840s and 1850s that strove to keep the country Protestant by curbing immigration and naturalization of Catholic immigrants. The “Hello Wisconsin” piece cited the interview with Professor Hatfield the day before and decried the ease of developing a “cynical attitude toward research if you do nothing more than read the titles of projects.” Furthermore, it discussed how many research projects without apparent practical applications have subsequently led to great scientific achievements (for example, research on rat poison that led to the discovery of dicumarol, a widely used anti-coagulant medication).

The Public Debates Love Research: Letters to the Editor

The discussion and controversy surrounding Hatfield and Bersheid’s Golden Fleece Award continued in the pages of The Capital Times, but, until a front-page article in June were thereafter limited to the opinions voiced within the letters to the editor. Wisconsin residents entered the debate. Before the end of March, the paper published two readers responses to Proxmire’s first Golden Fleece Award. On March 22, a letter criticized the James Reston New York Times editorial on the first Golden Fleece award, by stating that the writer Reston lacked the knowledge or background of the senator who is charged with evaluating the National Science Foundation’s budget. The author argued that “[t]he point Mr. Reston misses is the futility of the project.” The author did not believe it was possible to study love and jabbed, “Do they take a poll? Do they send out

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questionnaires?” The author concludes that the funds could be better spent by studying “hunger, anger, poverty and frustration.”

The following week, another letter supporting Proxmire’s first Fleece was published. The author described love research as “sketchy” and believed that understanding why marriages fail was an absurd proposition. More information was needed and the author invited Hatfield or the NSF to defend their research thoroughly to the public. Hatfield’s interview in response to Proxmire had been printed in *The Capital Times* on March 19, but was perhaps overlooked or too specialized to satisfy this critic. Although Hatfield explained in the interview how her research was one component of the basis for a scientific understanding of love, it apparently did not convince these critics that love could be scientifically studied and thus that such work deserved public funds. These were the same points that Proxmire made in his initial press release and they continued to strike an intuitive chord with the public.

Proxmire’s criticism of federal funding for scientific research projects remained controversial in the months following his first Golden Fleece Award. On April 1, “Chicago Profs Flunk Prox on Love and Bears,” amusingly criticized Proxmire for his ignorance regarding the research on romantic love, Alaskan brown bears, and the ice age in Africa. Located right below the article was another featuring Proxmire, “Prox Rips FTC Chief For Halting Inquiry,” as the senator had attacked the Federal Trade Commission chief for halting a consumer protection inquiry. Seventeen scientists from

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the University of Chicago signed a letter and chipped in to purchase Proxmire a year’s subscription to *Scientific America* in order that he might better understand contemporary scientific issues. The scientists’ jesting response advised Proxmire “that if the title and texts prove too abstruse, all articles in the journal can be effectively understood by looking at the pictures and diagrams and reading the diagrams.” Despite being attacked, the scientific community retained its sense of humor.⁹⁴

Just a few days later, on April 3, another response to Proxmire’s first Golden Fleece appeared, entitled “Why is Prox against ‘Love’ study?: ‘I Don’t Want an Answer’ He Says.” The reprinted *Washington Post* article outlined Proxmire’s criticisms of several projects while commenting how “Congressmen are notorious loath to finance pure research.” Berscheid defended the grant, explaining that the growing divorce rate as well as many unanswered questions surrounding human emotions were still important subjects for study, such as the similarity between love and infatuation, how hate enters a marriage, and whether it is reasonable to expect your partner to satisfy all of your needs.⁹⁵

**Academics Support Scientific Research**

Within a few weeks, on April 15, 1975, “UW Faculty Blasts Proxmire: Charge Senator’s Attitudes Harms Basic Research,” was the bold title of an article featuring many arguments against Proxmire’s position on basic research. The University of Wisconsin’s faculty senate defended the work of their colleague Elaine Hatfield. They adopted a resolution which “deplores the damage that is being done to basic research and

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to freedom of scientific inquiry by irresponsible and inaccurate attacks."

According to the faculty senate, Hatfield’s work was misrepresented and the peer review process of the NSF was undermined. The former chancellor, William Sewell, stated that Proxmire’s comments “make it quite apparent that he feels that public funds should be limited to studies with immediate or short-term practical pay-off rather than to basic research.” The former chancellor went on to outline the role of the NSF and Congress and warn that:

It would be unfortunate, indeed, if the National Science Foundation, set up by Congress, for the express purpose of keeping this country a leader in basic research, were forced to shift an undue share of its attention to the short-term practical pay-off of the projects it supports.

Sewell also forewarned that the overall direction of basic research could be swayed by political consideration:

An even more serious chilling effect would be felt if young investigators concluded that it was unwise to propose important new studies on problems which, by their very nature, invited partisan attack or ridicule by powerful public figures.

Indeed, it could be damaging to scientific inquiry if political considerations determined research, rather than the expansion of knowledge. Sewell finished his argument by challenging Proxmire directly, calling his use of office “irresponsible” and “unethical” for he not only misrepresented the scholarship but had unparalleled access to the media.

The article concluded with an important point from a journalism professor who had proposed a study of “mass communications and the political process” but was immediately warned by contacts at the National Science Foundation to avoid research

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that Proxmire could debase. This last point made it clear that the Chancellor’s fears, that political considerations were impacting research, were already becoming a reality.  

A follow-up article appeared two days after the “Prox Gets Faculty Rebuke.” The April 17 piece was mostly a condensed version of the previous article. Drawing from their long relationship with Proxmire, *The Capital Times* ventured to comment:

Proxmire is a coolly calculating politician who rarely misjudges the temper of the times. So his attack was deliberate. We find it hard to place the Wisconsin senator in the ranks of the anti-intellectuals, but his actions certainly lay him open to such an assumption.

Proxmire had worked for the paper in the late 1940s and the paper had been covering Senator Proxmire’s activities almost daily, thus they understood his politics very well. With good reason, the editors were reluctant to label him an “anti-intellectual” for his positions were typically well informed. He held graduate degrees from Harvard in political science and from Yale in business, and was known to conduct significant research on a topic before declaring a position. The editors additionally stated that Proxmire’s attacks were “deliberate,” and that he rarely missed the public mood. The vast majority of the articles covering the first Golden Fleece Award in *The Capital Times* were critical of Proxmire, his only vocal support coming from constituent letters to the editor. Although the paper’s editorial staff, as well as many academics, condemned the Hatfield and Berscheid Golden Fleece Award, it would seem that the public was not in favor of funding relationship research. This fact was supported by Proxmire’s office

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97 Ibid.
records which reveal that he had received one hundred and ninety-one correspondences supporting the first Golden Fleece Award and sixty-nine correspondences against it.100

The Second Official Golden Fleece Award

On April 15, the second official Golden Fleece Award was announced by The Capital Times, “Prox Calls Monkey Research 'Biggest Waste of Tax Money.” April’s award went to Roland R. Hutchinson of Kalamazoo State Hospital in Michigan for his research on human and monkey facial expressions. Proxmire quoted from the $500,000 seven-year study that found that monkeys “became angry when they were shocked and would try to get away from the shock.” With an eye for what the public might find amusing, Proxmire summarized the researcher's conclusions that “drunk monkeys do not usually react as quickly or as often as sober monkeys and that hungry monkeys get angry more quickly than well-fed monkeys.”101 For his part, Hutchinson defended his work on aggression in several animal species, noting that with a better understanding of anger, aggression and violence better treatments for and corrective actions can be implemented in humans. Like Berscheid and Hatfield he believe that his research was socially significant. Hutchinson also struck back at Proxmire describing his "public, uninformed and inexpert discredit of work which is so socially necessary” as “a disservice to his constituents and to the country.” Scientists did not complacently accept the senator’s critiques of their research; rather, they actively defended their work, explaining its real world applications and often striking back at Proxmire. Research was not a trivial matter

“Robo Reports.” April 7 through April 21, 1975.
to the researchers that Proxmire attacked. Their personal and professional lives were often intertwined. Hatfield’s research of love was inspired by her personal problems, and Hutchinson had dedicated seven years of his life to his work and also depended upon it for financial support. Whereas for Berscheid, her professional work becoming the center of a national political debate caused irreparable harm to her personal life.102

**The “Love” Debate Continued**

By the end of April the debate surrounding “love” research had created such a level of cultural awareness that nationally syndicated columnist Art Buchwald dedicated his April 29 column to the potential of social science to address some of society’s most pressing issues. He began the article by outlining Berscheid and Hatfield’s research and the debate with Proxmire, and segued into the application of social science research to other hotly debated issues. Hijacking the language of love, he cited how the people’s love affair with President Gerald Ford had abruptly ended and wanted to know why people “fall-in” and “fall-out” of love with their leaders. Providing a tongue-in-cheek description of an experiment with mice intended to replicate the population’s relationship with the White House, he proposed that for an $84,000 experiment, a lot of grief could be prevented. For the punch line, Buchwald described the hypothetical rejection from Proxmire: “he turned me down... He wants the money to go for research on how to build a better mouse trap.”103 The article proved astute and amusing, simultaneously revealing the widely held belief that social science research could not answer important questions while poking fun at Proxmire’s extreme practicality. Buchwald’s column engaged the

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102 Ibid.
controversial debate over federal expenditures with humor, showing how either an extremely liberal or conservatism stance were outlandish.\textsuperscript{104}

On May 20, \textit{The Capital Times} published the article, “Communicate or Forget It: Prox,” which covered the budget hearings by Proxmire’s Appropriations subcommittee. The subcommittee debated whether to approve or increase the $751 million budget for the National Science Foundation as requested by President Ford. The president of the University of Virginia provided testimony to the subcommittee, defending the NSF’s process for awarding grants. The president argued that Proxmire’s approach was flawed, as not all research was easily understood or had immediate practical applications and that such an approach would remove funding from important research. The article was dominated by statements from Proxmire in bold letters proclaiming, “If they can’t communicate what they find out, they should forget it,” and “If we can’t understand it, forget it.” The president of the University of Virginia did his best to make the debate about whether or not senators were qualified to judge the research projects that received funds.\textsuperscript{105}

The last coverage of “love” research by \textit{The Capital Times} in 1975 was a front-page article on June 2. The piece covered the public and private lives of Professor Hatfield and her husband and research associate William Walster. The article provided personal details of their relationship, such as her position as a full professor at age thirty-seven and his position as an associate professor at age thirty-three, along with their habit

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{105} “Communicate or Forget It: Prox,” \textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] May 20, 1975. It is unclear whether the requested budget was reduced, but in general scientists were confronted with reduced funding from the federal government and increased scrutiny. See Robert C. Cowen, “Scientists Recall Better Days,” \textit{The Capital Times} [Madison] June 12, 1975, Sec. 1, 8.
of eating dinner in bed while watching television. However, the purpose of the article was to share their research with the public and announce their upcoming appearance in *People* magazine on June 9, covering their research, marriage, and lifestyle. Hatfield was motivated by the opportunity to share her research in plain terms, “so that even Proxmire could understand it.”

Hatfield vented her frustration in trying to communicate her research topic to the public, stating that even though some people believed the research to be hopeless, she and Berscheid “really care.” The article pointed out how “love” research was just a small part of the study and described their work into equity theory as:

> ...the fundamental premise that relationships—whether they are between husband and wife, employer and employee, social worker and welfare client—seem to go awry if one of the parties feels he or she is getting less out of the relationship than he or she is putting in.

Hatfield made it clear in the article that she wanted scientists to engage earnestly the tough questions surrounding relationships with the hope of providing some direction and insight to the public.

**Conclusions: Local and Regional Newspaper Coverage**

In 1975, men and women’s issues were prominent features of print media and the tensions between the sexes were often directly addressed with articles covering aspects of sex and love, or indirectly with sexual and romantic innuendo. However, *The Capital Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* handled men and women’s personal and public relationships issues very differently. The *Chicago Tribune* printed four articles about Proxmire’s first Golden Fleece Award but did not present the detailed arguments

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107 Ibid.
defending the research as featured in *The Capital Times*. Despite organizational restructuring, the *Chicago Tribune*’s conservative stance created a gender bias in its news coverage and editorial content. The *Tribune*’s coverage of sex, prostitution, and gender issues were prone to sensationalism, focusing on the victims of sexual crimes rather than the perpetrators, and in other contexts focusing upon gender in stereotypical ways. Opportunities to ask incisive questions, provide salient details, and reveal hidden power structures were most often missed.

The print coverage and editorial content of *The Capital Times* presented a very different take on men and women’s issues. Women were usually presented as equals, fulfilling the new editorial standards established by the McGraw-Hill Book Company in 1974. Although thinly veiled sexual services accounted for much of its advertising content, and more mainstream advertising was rife with the sexual exploitation of women that characterizes most advertising from that period, the paper also provided copious coverage of debates involving American’s changing sexual practices, and the tensions between men and women. These ranged from the local controversy surrounding massage parlors, the changing disclosure laws about rape victim information, and continuously offering announcements that addressed the conferences, clubs, and other events in which women’s sexual, biological, and professional agency were common topics. Such coverage showcased the progressive values that underwrote the paper and provided some insight into the Wisconsin electorate and the liberal college town where it was published. The paper provided an open venue for Hatfield and Berscheid to defend their research from Proxmire’s public attacks while also featured editorials from respected pundits.
supporting their research. It also printed several letters to the editor which, if representative, revealed the dominant sentiment about “love” research was that it was a waste of public funds. On the whole, the paper provided readers with a thoughtful discussion of current events that included consistent coverage of shifting roles and issues surrounding men and women’s personal and professional relationships.

Coverage of the first Golden Fleece Award by *The Capital Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* showcased their contrasting coverage. The *Chicago Tribune* limited its coverage to reproducing Senator Proxmire’s arguments and voicing its pessimism about achieving the goals of relationship science. *The Capital Times* gave voice to the nuanced particulars of relationship science, allowing the female scientists to defend their work in public, and it provided months of follow-up coverage. Overall, *The Capital Times* allocated much more print space to the topic. Comparing and contrasting coverage of this single issue reveals a wide gap in how issues involving women were covered, including the sophistication with which these issues were addressed, the resources devoted to researching the news, as well as revealing the values of publishers, editorial staff, and perhaps advertisers. A gender bias was present that affected coverage and simultaneously expressed and reinforced existing hierarchies of power. Men and women’s personal and professional roles were in the process of renegotiation in the mid-1970s. Some media outlets continued to minimize or dismiss the importance of women’s social, political, and economic concerns while other embraced these issues by providing detailed and sophisticated treatment.
As outlined in chapter one, the scholarship of cultural historian Elana Levine presented how sexual content and innuendo were an ubiquitous feature of American television in the 1970s. This chapter and the previous chapter have shown that sex and romance-focused content and innuendo were also constant topics or subtexts within daily newspaper coverage from the period. Examining the media’s handling of sexual and romantic topics is central to understanding how Americans debated the cultural changes of the mid-1970s. Chronicling and contextualizing the public debate of the first Golden Fleece Award helps address how Americans engaged these discussions.

The constant focus on sex and the private and public relationships between men and women in the media expressed underlying cultural tensions between the traditional values of the past and the progressive values of a changing society. In addition to the liberalized lifestyles resulting from the sexual revolution, women were winning educational and professional equality through a variety of new laws and judicial rulings. The relationships between men and women were changing in their personal and professional lives. These changes were also political issues. In part the result of legal ruling in favor of equality, Americans increasingly accepted the issues that women and other minorities faced as political issues. The nation had become aware that personal, professional, and political issues were interwoven.
Conclusion

PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL, AND POLITICAL TENSIONS: THE LEGACY OF SCIENCE DEBATES

The integrity of psychological science is based on the academic freedom to explore fundamental questions about the nature of human behavior, thoughts, feelings, and social processes.
--American Psychologist, March 2002

Powerful political, religious, and business constituencies always yearn to get into the act; yearning to control what scientists investigate, how they conduct their research, the conclusions at which they arrive, and the information they disseminate.... Nonetheless, I think that it’s important to remind ourselves that, in the long run, science is on the winning side.
--Elaine Hatfield, Summer 2007

Why So Controversial?: The First Golden Fleece Award

The overarching argument of this work addresses how the dramatic economic, political, and social changes of the 1970s were regularly interpreted through the lens of men and women’s relationships. Disputes between men and women--personal and professional--were a constant theme of newspaper coverage in the mid-1970s. Many of these conflicts were deliberately reinforced by the media, but many were founded in legislative action, public policy, and judicial rulings. These governmental changes in tandem with the ongoing sexual revolution permanently reorganized American customs, laws, and habits. The result was a palpable tension between men and women’s public, private, and political relationships.

Americans expressed their apprehensions about and support for these changes by debating the roles, rights, and responsibilities of men and women. While political issues

2 “Featured Interview,” Human Behavior and Evolutionary Society.
such as Title IX and the Equal Rights Amendment were reported and argued about in
daily newspapers, a less obvious debate about men and women’s personal relationships
was also carried out. The American media was thus preoccupied with topics that involved
love and sex--an obvious expression of men and women’s relationships--and was fond of
teasing out these themes, even when they were not central to the content of a news piece.
One example was how the printed news coverage of Proxmire’s first Golden Fleece
Award linked his marriage issues with the research that he attacked. It was common for
the personal, professional, and political aspects of a story to be interwoven. The Golden
Fleece for love research was newsworthy precisely because it easily became part of the
ongoing debates between men and women. The popularity of the story spread because it
involved a man purporting no need for research about love but who clearly had
relationship problems, and defended by a woman arguing for the potential social benefits
of the research. The first Golden Fleece was also newsworthy because it involved the
fiscal responsibility of the federal government--a great concern at the time. While
Proxmire attacked dozens of federal expenditures in 1975, none drew the same level of
public and professional response as the first Golden Fleece Award.

**Mid-1970s America: Conflicts Between Men and Women**

Changes affecting the private roles of men and women, their employment
opportunities, and the two-parent family structure all altered the landscape of American
life throughout the 1970s. Although underway well before the decade began, these
changes were heavily debated by the mid-1970s. Given the traditional gender binary at
the time, issues were often framed as a battle between men and women. Debates
addressing cultural, political, and economic changes dominated cultural discourse in the four daily newspapers covered in this study. From legal disputes and the implementation of new legislation to private relationships and high-profile sporting events, issues involving men and women’s conflicts were a common feature of public debates.

Many Americans felt challenged by the increased number of women laborers at a time when national deindustrialization meant a gross decrease in the number of well-paid, blue-collar jobs commonly occupied by men. Loss of jobs combined with skyrocketing inflation—topping eleven percent in 1974—caused many families to struggle financially. A second income became necessary in many households. The percentage of wives and mothers working outside the home grew, a trend on the rise for decades. At the same time, increased opportunities in education and athleticism rose for women, while the divorce rate visibly increased annually, doubling between 1965 and 1974.³

For the first time in the nation’s history, masses of college-educated women were entering the workforce seeking professional and well-compensated employment. Since the number of all jobs had declined due to the recession, women and men were in direct competition for any available employment. Male privilege traditionally restricted women’s employment in most professional fields, such as the scientific and legal sectors, but this system was slowly dismantled through increased access to education and legislation promoting gender equality. These changes ushered many women not only into the workforce, but placed them in the spotlight of labor, gender, and economic issues.⁴

Many Americans interpreted these social changes as direct challenges to their way of life.

⁴ Bailey and Farber, American in the 70s, 109.
The increased presence of women in the nation’s workforce and the numerous successes of the women’s movement focused attention upon women (and other minorities) as the source of social changes along with personal, and economic problems. Thus, issues surrounding men and women’s public and private relationships were very controversial in mid-1970s America.

**Gender Bias in Newspaper Coverage**

 Debates surrounding men and women’s issues were a daily presence in the articles, editorials, and letters to the editor. Although many newspapers regularly addressed women’s equality, women were often presented in stereotypical terms. Sexual double-entendres and teasing out themes of “love” and “sex” were common practices in articles where such puns and themes were not central to the subject matter. American newspapers were not yet able to address gender equality with an unbiased style. Despite these shortcomings, newspaper coverage and its public debates brought greater awareness of issues central to men and women’s debates, such as changes in divorce laws, employment protections, and even the intricacies of personal matters, such as love. However, addressing these disputes highlighted for a general audience—albeit in a period-specific gender-influenced way—that women were due legal and professional respect, and that relationship problems were legitimate professional and political issues. Interpersonal relationship issues, i.e. “love,” was a widespread social concern that impacted professional and political spheres.
The Impact of the First Golden Fleece on Proxmire

The first Golden Fleece Award garnered the independent senator from Wisconsin national publicity without widespread resentment or backlash beyond the academic community. Proxmire, a career politician and well-respected member of Congress, was continuously covered by national news agencies by the late 1960s. Yet, in 1975, Proxmire’s most controversial positions included his criticisms of scientific research, particularly those projects examining the issues affecting the relationships between men and women. Those issues generated the most activity within the editorial pages. For example, in August, Proxmire also criticized a Federal Aeronautical Association study that examined the weight and size of stewardesses. This was the only other topic in 1975 that resulted in two letters to the editor of The N.Y. Times. Like research on love, it was a hot button topic because it addressed the changing roles of women, publicly funded research, and had a sexual angle, as it involved the requirements for female employees to be thin (and ostensibly attractive). Federal mandates against discrimination meant that job

5 “Chicago Profs Flunk Prox on Love, Bears,” September 7, 1975, L.A. Times, Sec. 7, 1. This article was not listed in the L.A. Times annual index. The short and amusing public letter to Proxmire from nine University of Chicago professors—one of whom was a Noble Prize winner—flunked Proxmire on his ability to understand the research projects that he criticized. The professors voiced support for three specific science projects including Hatfield and Berscheid’s love research. They also purchased a year subscription to Scientific American for the senator and stated, “We feel that you [Proxmire] would benefit through an increased awareness of problems in contemporary science… Let us remark finally that if the title and the texts prove too abstruse, all articles in the journal can be effectively understood by looking at the pictures and diagrams and reading the diagrams.” The debate over love research continued to be newsworthy much later in the year.

6 L.A. Times editorial board piece from November 19, 1975, applauded Proxmire for his diligent service, explaining that he had been present for every roll-call vote for the past nine years, which was 4,000 consecutive ayes or nays, to which no one in Congress can even come close. “The Senator Is In,” LA Times, November 19, 1975, Sec. 2, 8. In addition, Proxmire’s involvement in crafting and passing legislation that loaned New York City Federal funds also made him a very newsworthy subject to The New York Times. In just the last few months of 1975 he appeared thirty-one times in articles covering New York City’s financial crisis.
opportunities for women were expanding. But, among airline stewardesses, slim women were provided preferential treatment.\(^7\)

Proxmire courted controversy when his press releases addressed these and other issues that touched upon the shifting and often contentious landscape of men and women’s relationships. Yet, it was the decisions of the news agencies that shaped the debate. They decided what issues were worthy of coverage, and ultimately their portrayal of the issues and participants influenced public opinion. News coverage expressed value judgments through decisions that determined placement of articles on a page, location within the paper, the pictures chosen to accompany articles, and even the surrounding content, including advertising. Surprisingly, it was the preoccupation with men and women’s debates by news agencies, specifically their interest in Hatfield and Berscheid’s research, that presented Hatfield with new career opportunities.

**The Impact of the Golden Fleece on Elaine Hatfield’s Career**

The Golden Fleece award changed the direction of Hatfield’s career. It forced her to take a more public role and in turn opened the field of relationship science to a wider audience. It also created professional challenges and imposed significant limitations on her future research. After the award, the National Science Foundation sent out a message never again to mention “love” in a grant proposal.\(^8\) In the months after the first Golden Fleece Award, with the work of other researchers attacked, the NSF implemented new procedures intended to stymie controversy; thereafter, the NSF first examined the title of


\(^8\) Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 28, 2012. Hatfield did not recall if it was an official correspondence, private letter, or phone call.
a given project and then proposed changes in order to mitigate potential problems in the initial review process. Hatfield recounted how Rolly Radloff, an administrator at the NSF, was honest and supportive, but was unequivocal in stating that Hatfield was not going to get another grant for a very long time. Radloff counseled her to wait before applying for funding, that she should allow plenty of time for the controversy to blow over. He did not want her research, which the NSF considered cutting edge and important to relationship science, to be initially approved only to have the funds later withdrawn.\(^9\) Only after receiving the Golden Fleece Award did Hatfield became fully aware of how controversial her research was.\(^10\)

When asked directly about the impact of the award on her career, Hatfield did not believe that it altered its course. She stated, “Hardly any of my research has been funded.”\(^11\) Most of her research was conducted in tandem with her teaching responsibilities which provided a steady income. When pressed further, Hatfield denied that it was significant. Beyond admitting that for the first time she realized love research could lead to “big trouble,”\(^12\) she rejected political considerations having affected her subsequent research. Her personal judgment may be an earnest evaluation; however, the availability of grant funds and her research productivity tell a different story. After receiving the Golden Fleece Award, her original research all but disappeared for several years. Her research publications from 1970 through 1974 totaled twenty-six articles, but in 1975 she only published two articles, not a single research article in 1976 or 1977, and

\(^10\) Interview with Elaine Hatfield, February 28, 2012
\(^11\) Ibid.
\(^12\) Ibid.
only six more from 1977 through 1980. Her research productivity in the six years following the award amounted to less than one-third of her productivity in the five years leading up to the award.

Between 1966 and 1975, Hatfield received four National Science Foundation grants totaling $463,800 in order to fund all aspects of her research, including stipends and tuition for graduate assistants, a part-time statistician, and a full-time secretary who managed the grant paperwork, filing, correspondences, and accounting. Hatfield cannot recall worrying about funding in the 1960s and through the mid-1970s. She sent her research proposals to the National Science Foundation, a panel of specialists gave feedback and then always recommended her research for funding. “Earlier in my career, either we were better funded in America or I was doing more popular research, so that I always had two big grants. I never had to worry. When one grant was expiring I always had the other to rely upon.”

Apparently money flowed easily until the national firestorm generated by love research became front page news.

Receiving the Golden Fleece Award negatively impacted her research career. Commenting upon the fallout from the award, Hatfield states:

I remember the first time, after I got the Golden Fleece Award, that I was turned down for a grant and I was catatonic. I never knew that you could be turned down for a grant. I was shell shocked. I couldn’t believe what happened. I had to lay off all of these people that had worked for me for years. It was very traumatic.14

Receiving the Golden Fleece Award undoubtedly affected Hatfield’s research output and the trajectory of her career. Although she denies that it affected her personal will or the

13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
direction of her research, it impeded her ability to carry out the basic studies that had formed the cornerstone of her research career. Already well-respected in her field, Hatfield was forced by the award into the role of a publicly recognized expert on love.

Hatfield’s receipt of the award drove her into the fields of marketing and politics; the debate took her career in new and unpredicted directions. Within several years, the self-described shy scholar was on a national media campaign, appearing on a variety of television shows, everything from *Hee Haw* and *The Tonight Show* to interviews with Barbara Walters on the news program 20/20. At this time, Hatfield was promoting her 1978 book, *A New Look at Love*, which also won the American Psychological Foundation’s “National Media Award.” The book presented the current research on love in a form accessible to a general audience. *A New Look at Love* sought to share the discoveries of relationship science with the American public.15

As Hatfield quickly learned, the role of a public persona was quite different from researcher. Although she published few research papers in the years that followed, her available energies were directed toward contributing chapters and writing books. In addition, Hatfield’s work with students increasingly impacted the direction of her research. For example, her students were interested in human sexuality, and thus her work shifted to focus on sexuality rather than emotional contagion, social justice, and physical attractiveness. This led her to comment, “Now I’ve gotten to the point where I’m almost always doing sexuality research. But that’s because it’s what always interests students.”16

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
It took significant courage for Hatfield to defend herself against the attack of a powerful senator. Her professional reputation was challenged, her funding was eliminated, and her personal life was disrupted by bags of mail from the public overwhelmingly condemning her research. In the years that followed, she required a steely resolve to remold her skills as a researcher into those required to face television cameras. Following the Golden Fleece Award, Hatfield never again received a grant from the National Science Foundation.¹⁷

"A Miser, Not an Ideologue"¹⁸

When Senator Proxmire stated that some things should remain a mystery and that love was one of them, this was a truthful expression of his personal values. He had been married twice, first to Elsie Rockefeller (1946-1954), then to Ellen Hodges Sawall (1956-2005). He and Elsie Rockefeller had separated in the early 1970s and then reconciled in the months leading up to the first Golden Fleece Award. From the few pieces of scattered evidence that provide insight into his private life, it is clear that he was not an attentive husband. His primary focus was on his political career. For these reasons, his first wife left him in the weeks following his second gubernatorial bid in 1954, and his second wife Ellen Sawall bemoaned her husband’s inattention to family issues in her 1963 autobiography One Foot in Washington: The Perilous Life of a Senator’s Wife. Sawall was very supportive of her husband’s career and his tireless work ethic, however, her book makes it clear that she and their children were not his number one priority. Due to Proxmire’s dedication to his work, Sawall found it very difficult to manage a family

¹⁷ Ibid.
because of her husband’s unpredictable schedule. She could not plan vacations or even set a regular dinner time because sessions of Congress often carried late into the night and well past their seasonal end dates.

However, there is no indication that Senator Proxmire was sexist or that sexism in any way informed his choice for the first Golden Fleece Award. All evidence suggests that he simply did not believe that such research should be supported by public funds. On April 3, 1975, Proxmire wrote a personal letter to Professor Hatfield in order to explain his reasons for criticizing her work. His second paragraph reads,

I read with interest your analysis of your particular study and the applicability of equity theory to intimate relationships. It is obvious that your methodology is thorough, articulate, and well conceived, but there just does not seem to be any startling revelations emanating from this series of research.

Proxmire was an open minded intellectual and actually examined Hatfield and Berscheid’s research. But after stating how the average taxpayer is struggling and that the government must manage its funds wisely, he reiterates his original argument: “NSF and our other research agencies could spend their entire budget studying why and how people fall in love and all of its ramifications, and still never get an answer.” He may have respected the scientists work, but he did not believe that an answer would ever be forthcoming.  

A few weeks after writing Hatfield, on April 18, 1975, Senator Proxmire issued his second Golden Fleece Award to the National Science Foundation, NASA, and the Office of Naval Research for spending approximately $500,000 to fund the behavioral research of Ronald R. Hutchinson. The second Golden Fleece Award was not very

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19 Personal Correspondence from Senator William Proxmire to Dr. Elaine Hatfield (Walster), April 2, 1975.
controversial when issued, but before the end of the decade it required the Supreme Court to rule on two important legal issues. Hutchinson’s work sought an objective measure for aggression, concentrating on the behavior of certain animals such as those who clench their jaws when exposed to stressful stimuli. A selection of Proxmire’s press release read:

All of this money was given to Dr. Roland R. Hutchinson of Kalamazoo State Hospital in Michigan. Dr. Hutchinson told NASA that people get angry when they feel cheated and tend to clench their jaws or even scream and kick, that drunk monkeys do not usually react as quickly or as often as sober monkeys and that hungry monkeys get angry more quickly than well-fed monkeys. The funding of this nonsense makes me almost angry enough to scream and kick or even clench my jaw. Dr. Hutchinson’s studies should make the taxpayer as well as his monkeys grind their teeth. In fact, the good doctor has made a fortune from his monkeys and in the process made a monkey out of the American taxpayer.\(^{20}\)

At the time of the award, Hutchinson was a state employee and also an adjunct professor at Western Michigan University.\(^{21}\)

Hutchinson’s life and career were immediately turned upside down. He was tasked with publicly defending his research and providing the media with interviews and public statements. His family was harassed—including death threats in the mail—and within a year the funding from multiple sources that supported his research for the past seven years evaporated. He had to lay off his staff, close his laboratory, and find a new source of income. He was not a tenured university professor like Elaine Hatfield, and thus his research was his primary source of income. In essence, he had lost his livelihood.\(^{22}\)


After watching his life’s work disappear in less than a year, Hutchinson sought legal advice and decided to sue Senator Proxmire for damages, charging Proxmire with defamation. Hutchinson claimed that Proxmire’s comments caused loss of income and humiliation. It was a tricky case to prove for several reasons. First, senators are protected by the speech and debate clause in article one, section six of the United States Constitution. The clause protects all members of Congress from anything said while carrying out the tasks of their job that are not felonies or considered treason. Second, it was very difficult to prove libel if the damaged party was determined to be a public figure. If Hutchinson were considered a public figure by the courts, he would then have to prove that Proxmire intended harm or had been reckless with his comments. However, if he were not deemed a public figure in the courts judgment, the burden of proof would then be much lower. Actual harm, rather than intended harm, would be sufficient to determine guilt. It was up to the courts to decide whether Proxmire was indeed protected by the speech-and-debate clause for public statements and the content of his printed newsletters, and whether Hutchinson’s receipt of public funds and the publication of his work in professional journals qualified him as a public figure.

The District Federal Court and the Appellate Court both quickly ruled in favor of Proxmire. With legal bills growing, Hutchinson and his lawyers carried on and petitioned the Supreme Court, which decided to hear the case. With the help of many organizations and scientific peers, including Elaine Hatfield, Hutchinson raised funds in order to cover

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legal costs and compiled statements regarding the professional damage Proxmire had inflicted.\textsuperscript{25}

In an eight-to-one decision, the Supreme Court decided that the debate-and-speech clause did not protect congressional members from statements made outside of official congressional duties. Official congressional duties were limited to committee hearings, committee reports, and debates on the Congressional floor.\textsuperscript{26} Press releases, constituent newsletters, and other public statements were not protected even if they simply repeated statements made in a protected venue. In addition, the court ruled that neither Hutchinson’s successful application for grants nor previous publication of his work established him as a public figure. “Neither of those factors demonstrates that Hutchinson was a public figure prior to the controversy engendered by the Golden Fleece Award; his access [to the media], such as it was, came after the alleged libel.”\textsuperscript{27} The work of a scientist or scholar, even if funded by public monies, proved insufficient to establish one as a public figure. Thus the Supreme Court ruled that Hutchinson only needed to prove actual damages rather than intended damages.\textsuperscript{28}

Having prevailed at the nation’s highest court, Hutchinson contacted Proxmire directly and sought an out-of-court settlement. Proxmire agreed to cover all the court costs, to pay Hutchinson $10,000 in damages, to issue an official retraction to several hundred media outlets, and to send out signed letters to each of the federal agencies that had provided funding that promised that he would no longer interfere in the grant

\textsuperscript{25} Hutchinson, “Scientists Provide a Civics Lesson for Politicians,” \textit{Observer}.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Hartman, Mersky and Tate, \textit{Landmark Supreme Court Cases}, 489.
deliberation process. Hutchinson’s legal triumph altered the course of the Golden Fleece Award and contributed to Proxmire’s growing respect for basic scientific research.

In the year leading up to the Supreme Court decision and settlement with Hutchinson, Proxmire was involved in another notable dispute with scientists. This time it was in regard to relinquishing his Golden Fleece Award to NASA for its fourteen to fifteen million-dollar grant proposal to scan the sky for extraterrestrial life. After heavy lobbying from the scientific community and a personal meeting with the well-known astronomer Carl Sagan, Proxmire eventually rescinded his Golden Fleece Award to NASA.

Proxmire learned many lessons from his controversial Golden Fleece Awards and the Supreme Court decision. He stopped naming scientists after the settlement with Hutchinson, and indeed gave fewer and fewer Golden Fleece Awards for scientific research (from three to four per year in the 1970s, to about one per year in the 1980s). By the time of his retirement, his position regarding basic scientific research had changed.

For Proxmire, federally funded research no longer needed to have immediate and practical applications in order to be worthwhile. Proxmire had lost several battles with scientists and went so far as to reverse his own position on basic research. In late 1988, months before the end of his fifth consecutive term in the Senate, he stated, “We certainly need something like a taxpayer’s watchdog..., We don’t pretend to always be right, but I

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29 Hutchinson, “Scientists Provide a Civics Lesson for Politicians,” Observer. Also see: “What is Going on in Washington,” Kiplinger, September 1980, 10. This article explained how Proxmire was using the royalties from his book The Fleecing of America to repay the federal government for his defense in the Hutchinson case. Article located in the “Senator William Proxmire Archives,” State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Box 198, Folder 24.

think we’ve been right most of the time. To err is human, and I hope we get divine forgiveness for the times that we’ve been wrong.”31

“To Attack is Simple, to Defend is Complex”32

Debates involving scientific research are an ongoing feature of American politics and culture. More recently, the focus has not been on the cost of an experiment, but on its potential moral, ideological, and religious consequences. In July 1998, the *Psychological Bulletin* published the article "A Meta-Analytic Examination of Assumed Properties of Child Sexual Abuse Using College Samples."33 As the peer-reviewed academic journal of the American Psychological Association (APA), the *Psychological Bulletin* is considered the preeminent psychological journal. Like many research papers, the article garnered little attention when initially published, but after publication by the North American Man/Boy Love Association and the National Association for the Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, a media storm erupted.34

The article evaluated fifty-nine studies of child sexual abuse in order to determine whether the socially accepted conclusions, most often reinforced in the studies regarding child sex abuse, were also scientifically valid. These conclusions included the following: that child sex abuse causes harm, that such harm is pervasive and intense, and that it is equivalently negative for boys and girls. The authors re-evaluated existing data in order to determine whether socially accepted values and beliefs regarding the significant and

31 Ibid.
32 “To Attack is Simple, to Defend is Complex” was the title of one section of Ellen Greenberg Garrison and Patricia Clem Kobor, “Weathering a Storm: A Contextual Perspective on a Psychological Research Controversy,” *American Psychologist*, Volume 57, No. 3 (March 2002), 165-175.
long-term harm caused by child sex abuse were, in fact, supported by data. The paper sought to address whether the conclusions of previous research were directed by social values rather than the scientific process. The authors concluded that child sex abuse victims were slightly less well-adjusted than members of control groups and that men were less affected than women, but that family environment affected social adjustment more than child sex abuse. These conclusions challenged the prevalent wisdom that child-sex abuse inflicted pervasive and lifelong harm upon the victim.\textsuperscript{35}

The nationally syndicated talk show host and psychologist Laura Schlessinger began attacking the APA in March 1999. Her statements were further sensationalized in the religious and conservative media and appeared on the front page of the \textit{Washington Times}. Legislative branches of several states introduced resolutions denouncing the article. An influential member of the House of Representatives, Tom DeLay (R) of Texas, publicly condemned the APA for supporting pedophilia. The reputation of the APA, its prospects for future funding, and the public image of psychologists as a whole all stood in jeopardy.\textsuperscript{36}

The APA took the offensive and worked with reporters from \textit{The New York Times} and \textit{The Philadelphia Inquirer} so that in-depth features from a scientific perspective would appear in the media. The APA needed to explain the scientific process to the public and clearly state that they were not advocating pedophilia by publishing an article addressing the subject. The APA wanted to share information as to how a scientific journal publishes research based upon the merits of the work, not moral or social values

\textsuperscript{35} Rind, Tromovitch, and Bauserman, "A Meta-Analytic Examination." \textit{Psychological Bulletin}.
\textsuperscript{36} Greenberg and Kobor, “Weathering a Storm,” \textit{American Psychologist}. 

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associated with the subject matter. The APA began this outreach program by publishing the short paper, "Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Scientific Journals in the Context of Public Policy," which was distributed to members of Congress and state psychological associations.\textsuperscript{37}

In May, following a press conference with a few members of Congress, several conservative groups, Schlessinger, and Representative Matt Salmon (R) of Arizona introduced House Concurrent Resolution 107 which condemned the APA for publishing the child sex abuse article. Portrayed as the advocate of child sex abuse, the APA now had to confront the entire Congressional body, in addition to various conservative and religious groups. Unable to manage the situation internally, the APA hired a public relations firm and a professional lobbyist. The APA became deeply involved in the legislative process, meeting with approximately forty congressional offices, sometimes working directly with Congress members and other times with their staffs.\textsuperscript{38}

With a barrage of support from conservative groups, it was clear to the APA that the resolution would pass. Even members of Congress who did not support it were intimidated enough to refrain from voting against it. The APA thus focused on moderating the language of the bill and, with great effort, specifically working with party leaders, managed to change the language so that it no longer denounced the APA or the \textit{Psychological Bulletin} for publishing the article. Both branches of the Congress passed the bill without a single vote against it.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 168-169.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 169-170.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 172-173.
The ordeal proved a significant learning experience for the APA. As a scientific organization, the APA did not have a broad base of constituents and thus was limited in its ability to organize a national grassroots campaign. The APA learned that its best follow-up move would be defensive and sought to implement new procedures that would avoid future controversies. It implemented several new policies, including allowing editors and staff to identify potentially charged issues in articles after acceptance but before publication. The APA would then modify the articles in order to limit misuse of the information while also directly addressing potential public concerns. This policy was expanded to include the addition of companion articles, editorial comments, and press releases determined to be necessary in order to mute potentially charged issues.\textsuperscript{40} Not all members of the scientific community approved of the APA’s acquiescence to outside pressure. The current President of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex, Elaine Hatfield, and all of the society’s past-presidents, signed a letter requesting that the APA “staunchly support the right of sexual scientists to engage in free intellectual inquiry.”\textsuperscript{41}

The APA did not stand strong in support of the child sex abuse study. Rather, it outlined their conclusions about how to mitigate controversy in a special issue titled, "Interactions Among Scientists and Policymakers: Challenges and Opportunities." The APA learned the importance of working with both liberals and conservatives, how to anticipate and work to prevent a controversy, and that maintaining its public image depended on a larger public relations force. In addition to the increased lobbying presence, the APA’s Public Communication Office began working with editors and

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 173-174.
\textsuperscript{41} Elaine Hatfield, etc. “Letter to the APA from Concerned Member of the Scientific Community,” July 3, 1999.
publishers in 2001 in order to publicize at least two choice articles each week. The program has significantly increased the news coverage provided to psychological studies by mainstream outlets and has thus produced a higher level of awareness in the general public and among policy-makers regarding the contributions of psychology.\footnote{Ibid., 174-175.}

Debates surrounding scientific research—especially those funded by the federal government—will always be subject to fiscal considerations and the winds of political change. The Golden Fleece Awards and the study of child-sex abuse are but a few examples of political and cultural debates surrounding science. More recently, national debates have involved funding for embryonic human stem cell and climate change research. Although the science supporting global climate change is now widely accepted, it remains a political football. Similarly, research that involves human emotion, sexuality, and reproduction is likely to remain controversial for the foreseeable future.

Hatfield’s receipt of Proxmire’s first Golden Fleece Award alerted her to the challenges that scientists face from political forces. Responding to the public attack of her work inspired Hatfield to become more politically active. She became more engaged with the professional organizations of her field, participating on several boards and committees of the American Psychological Association, joining the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, the International Society for Research on Emotions, and the International Association for Relationship Research, along with leading the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex in 1997-1998 as it president.\footnote{See “Curriculum Vita” at elainehatfield.com (November 1, 2012).}
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