DANGEROUSLY SENSUAL:
THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION, FEMINISM, AND GRRRL POWER
IN POSTWAR AMERICA

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In large measure, this dissertation has been a cathartic experience, allowing me to relive a time period which shaped my contemporary conception of what it means to be a woman in America. Like most Americans mentioned in this dissertation, I lived through a tumultuous time when the values and mores of American society changed radically. We now live in a world that is vastly different from and markedly more tolerant than the America of mid-century, and for that I am grateful. I am indebted to the many women and men of the postwar era who worked to advance the cause of civil rights and civil liberties, thus providing Americans today with an array of choices that were not available to them fifty years ago.

Many individuals, both professors and students, helped to bring focus to my research and subsequently impacted this dissertation. I am especially indebted to Margot Henriksen not only for her expert direction in producing this dissertation, but also for being an outstanding role model for excellent teaching. Her dedication to the craft of writing history is unparalleled, and her commitment to her students consistently reaches above and beyond the call of duty. I would also like to thank the additional members of my doctoral committee, Jerry Bentley, Robert McGlone, Richard Rapson, and Susan Schultz, who offered expertise, support, and encouragement over the years. This dissertation would not have been possible without the generous support I received during my studies. I would especially like to thank the Dai Ho Chun Scholarship Committee for awarding me the funds to complete this dissertation and the John F. Kennedy Memorial Scholarship which provided funds for me to conduct research at the Museum of Television and Radio in New York City. I would also like to thank the many students of mine, both high school and
college, who have shared their ideas, thoughts, fears, and insecurities with me, thus providing insight into the mindset of a new generation. Finally, I would like to thank my daughter, Erica, who patiently played with Barbies while I worked to bring closure to this project.
ABSTRACT

This dissertation, "Dangerously Sensual: The Sexual Revolution, Feminism, and Grrl Power in Postwar America," analyzes the impact of the sexual revolution and feminism on women in postwar America. I argue that the cumulative impact of these two forces produced a "dangerously sensual" brand of female empowerment. I trace through an interrogation of American media and culture the evolution of a highly sexualized femininity from its postwar origins in the mid-1950s to the present. This assertive, sexualized female identity developed both as a response to the cultural and social backlash against feminism and women's liberation in the 1970s and 1980s and as a consequence of the increasing sexualization of America's cultural landscape.

Women's issues have been inexorably linked to wider concerns in American society involving foreign policy and domestic affairs. The sexualization of American femininity began during the cold war when the consumer culture promoted consumption as patriotism and bolstered women's consumer power through a "sexual sell." The sexual revolution and the subsequent recognition of sex as a lucrative market furthered this trend. By the early 1960s, both married and single women struggled to embody new sexualized notions of femininity as the feminist movement gained momentum. The women's movement took a radical turn in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and radical feminists rooted their concerns about sexism in a wider critique of American society and foreign policy, particularly regarding the Vietnam War and racism. Liberationists also resisted the objectification and sexualization of women and some advocated lesbianism. This feminist extremism, however understandable, hastened a backlash against feminism and shifted some women's rights moderates into the anti-feminist camp. Part of the wider assault
by the New Right on the Left and on an American society transformed by the liberalism of the 1960s and 1970s, this conservative critique of feminism contributed to women's dangerously sensual compromise: accepting the sexualization of femininity for the benefits of liberation and empowerment. The legacy of this compromise has become visible in the current "Grrl Power" movement, where many younger American women find flaunting their sexuality a perfectly valid expression of their liberation.
CHAPTER ONE
The Dangerously Sensual Woman:
Sex, Power, and Compromise in Postwar America

But you must remember that arbitrary power is like most other things which are very hard, very liable to be broken; and, not withstanding all your wise laws and maxims, we have it in our power not only to free ourselves, but to subdue our masters, and without violence throw both your natural and legal authority at our feet.1

---Abigail Adams to John Adams, 1776

All is not well in Townsville. The Rowdyruff Boys -- creations of the evil villain Mojo Jojo -- are tearing up the streets, wreaking havoc on the city. Buttercup, Blossom, and Bubbles -- the Powerpuff Girls -- are down for the count. Their "grrl power" is simply no match for the brute strength of their male counterparts. As they lie dazed and bewildered in a deep pit in the street, a female voice offers them words of hope. The mayor's assistant, whose face the audience never sees, peers down the dark hole while exposing cleavage the size of the Grand Canyon. "Girls... you've just been attacking the problem from the wrong angle. You have what boys fear most. Instead of fighting, try being nice," she offers. "Huh?" they say in unison. "You know...nice," she says in a steamy, sexy voice as her hands accentuate her bosom. They get the message, and Blossom states with a wink, "Come on girls, let's go get 'em." They bounce back into the sky for one more round with the boys, this time armed with their dangerously sensual strategy. As the Rowdyruff Boys descend on the Powerpuff Girls in a final batter for control of the cartoon universe, the girls abruptly stop. They smile, they bat their eyes, they act coy, and they sway their hips. The boys stand transfixed, powerless, frozen like deer in the headlights. The girls pucker up, reach over, and plant one on each of them. Poof! The boys

explode and dissipate into the atmosphere. The evil Mojo Jojo is defeated, and "grrl power" has once again saved the day. As the show ends, Blossom confesses to the girls: "gee, I kinda liked kissing!" They giggle away into the sunset.2

On the surface, three pint-sized superheroines would seem an insignificant barometer of the state of women's identity in the new millennium. However, the "grrl power" movement of the 1990s and 2000s-- for which the cartoon figures have become icons -- exemplifies the conflicted notions of womanhood bombarding women and girls today. Even their name suggests conflict -- The Powerpuff Girls -- and begs further analysis.

Their success as a cult phenomenon is a microcosm of the way in which American society is coping with the aftermath of the cold war, modern American feminism, the sexual revolution, the women's liberation movement, and the subsequent backlash against feminism-- a backlash perpetuated by women and men alike -- in the 1970s and 1980s. Many areas of contestation about the role of women in American society remain matters of public debate for Americans of different generations and political persuasions. In the 1980s, faced with so many options, women felt compelled to "do it all," a condition labeled the "supermom syndrome," which Carl Degler attributed to women's inability to come to terms with their own conflicted ambitions.3 I argue instead that "supermom" gave way to "soccer mom" because of American society's failure to accommodate the rising ambitions of women. American women today struggle to balance the demands of career and family, with the workplace falling woefully short of society's needs for working parents and with government assistance remaining virtually nonexistent. Some women, caught between the unrelenting demands


of the public and private spheres, have chosen to focus on family rather than career. Some feminists from the 1960s and 1970s, who fought so tirelessly for the rights of women in the public sphere, feel undermined by this trend.

Alternatively, women today, even those with careers, are just as likely to find strength in their sexual power and their personal freedom as in their professional accomplishments, and this puzzles and concerns many observers. It is no wonder, though, since cultural representations of American women grew more sexual and more brazen over the years. Moreover, there have been few positive role models for girls and young women in the public sphere aside from the successful and sensual media icons which some observers have dubbed "poptarts." A sexually assertive feminine ideal currently graces all facets of America's media and popular culture. It seems that the dangerously sensual woman, which centuries ago posed such a threat to Enlightenment masculinity, has been resurrected in parody, and many feminists and women's liberationists from the 1960s and 1970s are concerned. Likewise, conservatives today lament the declining morality and provocative dress of America's girls and young women. Yet, many younger females feel that it is perfectly acceptable to flaunt their sexuality, and they look to icons like Madonna and Britney Spears as empowering role models. This dissertation offers an explanation which is rooted in the wider history of postwar America. I trace the origins of the dangerously sensual woman in American popular culture, and I show that this construct was a consequence of the sexual revolution, feminism, women's liberation, the cold war, and the resurgence of conservatism in American society. In the process, I also demonstrate that women's issues in the postwar era have been inexorably linked with wider concerns in American society regarding foreign policy, domestic affairs, and partisan politics.
The debate about American womanhood had its roots in the early postwar years as the role of women in America changed dramatically. After supporting the war effort by working in unprecedented numbers, Rosie the Riveter was expected to hang up her tool belt, don an apron, and morph into Betty Crocker. Although the institutional agenda in the immediate postwar years meant to curb the power of women and girls, the thriving consumer culture saw in these women and girls a vital and lucrative consumer market. In the mid-twentieth century, women were increasingly seen as the decision makers for many of the new consumer products that would fuel American prosperity in the coming decades. In the earlier twentieth century, many of the products of consumer culture were reserved for the native born, rising upper-middle class.4 By the 1950s, however, a vital economy and a rising standard of living propelled more families into the consumer market and fostered the democratization of consumerism, along with a mandate to "keep up with the Joneses."

During the cold war, consumerism also became a bulwark against communism. The production of consumer goods directly propelled the cold war arsenal, and the growing middle class was expected to do its part. Although for the most part advertising and mass media targeted the white middle-class consumer in the 1950s, more diverse socioeconomic and ethnic groups could now afford these products. By the 1960s, the creative revolution in advertising, tapping into the rising spirit of individualism, fostered a radical change in American marketing strategies, resulting in a more socioeconomically and intellectually diverse, yet still predominately white, reflection of American consumers and their values.

Moreover, there was a massive effort in the postwar era to reach women, mostly through television and women's magazines, which created space for women to negotiate a distinctly female culture, nurture an alternative strand of female empowerment, and articulate their dissatisfaction with the limitations of domestic containment. The sexual revolution further complicated the picture. Married couples in the 1950s and 1960s struggled to incorporate a rapidly changing value system regarding sex, marriage, and single life into their own presumably mainstream lifestyles. Young men and women received conflicting messages about premarital sex, career, marriage, and family.

Women of different age groups were affected in different ways by the ideology of domestic containment and the sexual revolution. In many instances, families needed women's incomes to participate fully in the thriving culture of conspicuous consumption. Women who had worked during World War II went back to work in large numbers after their children were older, sometimes out of necessity and sometimes by choice. Younger women, however, followed a "separate spheres" mandate more diligently as marriage ages plummeted to all-time lows and women gave up educational and career aspirations to raise families. This age group, caught between the Rosies and the baby boom's women's liberation movement, was the most susceptible to the "feminine mystique." All women, however, were affected by the sexual revolution which sent conflicting messages to women and girls about how to handle their acknowledged libidos and make the most of their feminine charms.

Young wives in the 1950s and 1960s tried to live up to a more youthful, sexualized feminine ideal. Baby boomers grew up with contrary messages about the role of women, both from their mothers and the culture. The "good girls don't " facade of the 1950s and early 1960s was easily subverted by a highly
sexualized female ideal that grew more overtly assertive in the 1970s and beyond. A double standard for men and women regarding sexual mores, even during the sexual revolution, further complicated women's perceptions of themselves. As Naomi Wolf noted in *Promiscuities: The Secret Struggle for Womanhood*, girls growing up during the sexual revolution were encouraged by the popular culture to embrace their sexuality, but American society lagged behind, often labeling women as "sluts" if they dared actually to embrace their scientifically sanctified libidos or "prudes" if they did not. While male sexual experimentation in adolescence continued to be encouraged as a rite of passage, women's sexuality was often cheapened and debased by the pornographic nature of its assimilation into American culture.5

Women in the 1960s received further mixed messages about the ideals of womanhood. For example, Helen Gurley Brown's 1962 exposé *Sex and the Single Girl*6 asserted that, contrary to popular mythology, women could lead fulfilling and satisfying lives as single career women without compromising their reputations or their "marriageability" later in life. Brown offered herself as a case in point. She repeatedly warned, however, that women could make greater strides in business by embracing their feminine charms rather than by emulating successful business men. More importantly, she counseled women on how to be attractive, sexy, and desirable in order to be surrounded by eligible men. She assured women that they could still find husbands after the age of thirty and have a fulfilling, fun life in the meantime that would be the envy of the bored suburban housewife. The chapters in her book read like an instruction manual for forging a dangerously sensual independent female identity, but the ultimate

goal was to attract and marry the *right* man, not just any man. Brown still held onto traditional goals of material prosperity and security; the idea was to make oneself worldly, independent, and sexy enough to attract the kind of man who would ultimately be worth the trouble. Women and men alike seemed confused by these new attitudes and values, and this confusion found expression quite prolifically in women's magazines, films, television shows, and self-help literature in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

In 1963, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* called on women to reject the ideals of domesticity and strive for personal fulfillment outside the home. In 1966, she went on to form the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the modern feminist movement took off. Eventually, the women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and 1970s turned upside down the notion of the "feminine mystique" and traditional American values regarding sex, career, marriage, and family. Female sexual permissiveness became accepted among unmarried women as singles culture blossomed and the sexual revolution took off in the 1960s and 1970s.

The women's liberation movement and radical feminism complicated and fragmented the women's rights movement as various factions of the movement often proved at odds with one another over the meaning of feminism and women's liberation. Some women's liberationists embraced sexual freedom and free love as an expression of their newfound emancipation. Others rallied against the objectification of women, the sexualization of femininity, marriage, and childbearing. Some women advocated lesbianism as a political statement. As a result, women's liberationists and feminists were often typecast as unfeminine, as lesbian man-haters. Many American women subsequently distanced

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themselves from the feminist label because they worried it would render them unappealing to men. Older feminists like Betty Friedan worried that radicals compromised the goals of women's rights and tried to steer the movement back toward the more moderate goals of equal access to the public sphere and reproductive choice. Conservatives seized the moment, and a backlash against feminism ensued. Nonetheless, the sexual revolution endured among conservatives and liberals.

The women's rights movement peaked with the passing of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in Congress in 1972 and the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion in 1973, but the 1970s went on to witness the feminization of poverty with a marked increase in single female-headed households. Regardless of whether or not gender roles were socially constructed, as radical feminists began to argue, women were the ones saddled with the unwanted consequences of free love. Progress in the political arena through traditional feminist channels certainly increased women's opportunities, but a backlash, in such forms as the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to be ratified, the onset of the anti-feminist movement, the failure of government to provide day care for children of working parents, and the dawn of the anti-abortion movement, spoke to the limitations of change in the political arena. The backlash against women was an integral part of the resurgence of conservatism which began in the mid-1960s and came to fruition with the election of President Ronald Reagan in 1980. Conservatives in the 1980s sought to overturn the liberal trends of the previous decades. Women, once again, were caught in the crossfire of a wider issue in American society. Thus, the legacy of liberation is today conflicted and contentious. American women now strive to come to terms with and make

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sense of the legacy of feminism and the sexual revolution, and their heroines are diametrically opposed as Hillary Clinton and Monica Lewinsky.9

I have divided this dissertation into two parts: the first addresses the prefeminist period during which time the sexual revolution had a profound impact on women's images of themselves; the second part examines the feminist period which witnessed the women's liberation movement, the fruition of the sexual revolution, the counterculture, and the backlash against feminism. Part One is entitled "Cold War, Hot Love, and the Sexual Sell: The Shaping of American Womanhood in Prefeminist America, 1955-1965," and it focuses on the forging of female identity and the new definitions of American womanhood that emerged under the cloud of the cold war. By the mid-1950s, McCarthy had been silenced and fears of internal subversion had declined. Trepidation about communism as an external threat, however, continued to plague the nation. The Soviet Union proved a formidable foe as the arms race escalated, and women played an integral role in the cold war. Women were likewise affected by the dawn of the consumer-driven sexual revolution of the 1950s, which dovetailed nicely with America's capitalist agenda. Chapter Two, "New Frontiers and Flexible Responses: Sex, Domesticity and the Shattered Mystique," examines the impact of these forces on married women; Chapter Three, "Deconstructing Whore-Madonna: Singles, Sex, and the Barbie Revolution," investigates single women.


(NOW) in 1966 and the election of President Ronald Reagan in 1980. The year 1966 also witnessed the rapid escalation of troop deployments to Vietnam, the formation of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, and the beginnings of an antiwar movement in American society. The division between married and single couples blurred as the sexual revolution, women's liberation, and the counterculture radically altered American's values. Chapter Four, "Flying High in the Age of Aquarius: Radical Feminism, Free Love, and the Sexual Revolution," discusses the impact of these forces on mainstream Americans. Chapter Five, "From Feminist to Femme Fatale: Backlash, Compromise, and the Sexual Save," suggests the ways in which sexuality became linked to power as the conservative movement sought to curtail the liberation of women. I conclude with the election of Ronald Reagan, as this event signaled the triumph of conservatism and the end of an era. The epilogue, "Poptarts, Whore-Madonnas, and Grrl Power: The Legacy of Liberation," explores the legacy of the sexual revolution and feminism and its impact on female identity today. I consider the debate between older and younger women about the meaning of feminism and liberation, and I expose a cultural landscape that has become increasingly sexualized, so much so that it hardly corresponds to the mores and values of middle-class Americans. I offer a reflection on how American notions of womanhood are affecting societies around the globe and inviting indignation given the mass exporting of American media and popular culture.

In the following chapters, I demonstrate that advertising, mass media, visual culture, and literature at once reflected, encouraged, and sometimes challenged this increasing obsession with femininity and sexual attraction. As television historians Lynn Spigel and Michael Curtin contend, the relationship between media and society is complex, and the efforts of media to achieve
hegemony in the name of profits are ongoing. The incorporation of social change and countercultural influences into the products of popular culture cannot, however, be dismissed as co-optation of dissent, as the products of mass media often offer a forum for the dissemination of countercultural values, however tamed and sanitized. Mass media can also provide vehicles for social change, in spite of media's grounding in a relatively conservative capitalist culture. I examine film, television, magazines, and self-help literature in the postwar era in order to illuminate and analyze the myriad messages, some constraining, some liberating, received by women about their proper roles in society. I pay particular attention to television since it played such a central role in American culture for the time period under investigation. As Horace Newcomb and Paul M. Hirsch noted in "Television as a Cultural Forum," television in the postwar era became America's national medium. As such, it acted as a "cultural forum," not imposing a dominant, hegemonic ideology, but rather serving to host a "rhetoric of discussion" which could both promote and challenge prevailing cultural norms and values.

Generally, the media presented women as increasingly sexy, assertive, and distinctly female over the decades -- thus, the dangerously sensual woman emerged in concert with the sexual revolution, modern feminism, and the women's liberation movement. Resistance to this dangerously sensual construct periodically surfaced, and often the forces of opposition were linked to dissatisfaction with America's foreign policy, particularly at the height of the protests against the Vietnam War and the concomitant embrace of countercultural lifestyles during the 1960s. Eventually, however, society reached

a compromise, one that was riddled with pitfalls: the sexualization of American femininity for liberation.

My research demonstrates that as women's efforts to make gains in the public sphere stalled in the mid-1970s, at the very time when conservatives launched an antifeminism campaign, women often resorted to using sex appeal as a means to circumvent the male power structure and increase women's economic and cultural power. I posit that using sexuality and feminine charms to gain power in a male-dominated capitalist society developed in conjunction with and as a consequence of this backlash against feminism and women's liberation in the mid-1970s. This feminine response appeared as a natural outgrowth of the sexual revolution, and has today become a double-edged sword. On the one hand, some women like Madonna and Britney Spears have successfully capitalized on their sexuality and femininity, elevating themselves to success by flaunting their feminine assets and their sexual power. Rather than being exploited for their sexuality, they have profited from it. On the other hand, the intensive focus on the importance of physical attributes for women has just as often resulted in the objectification of women and the pressure to conform to increasingly unattainable and sensual standards of beauty. Eating disorders are widespread in American society, and women and girls suffer feelings of inferiority as they fail to conform to airbrushed, computer-assisted, and surgically altered standards of beauty. Further, this sexualized ideal of womanhood informs the attitudes and fashions of girls as young as eight and nine years old, a fact which rightly concerns liberals and conservatives alike.

Was the sexual revolution a boon or a bane to feminism? I argue that it was both, and that the ambivalence about American womanhood today is a product of the mixed messages received by women and girls in the postwar era.
In much the same vein as Susan Douglas' *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media*, I argue that icons of female culture who at first glance seemed to subvert the feminist agenda actually reflected very profound and lasting shifts in American values regarding the role of women in society, ones that have given rise to female empowerment and opportunity. However, these cultural products have also resulted in unattainable expectations for beauty as sex appeal as a condition of success and have in some instances cheapened female sexuality. Through the lens of women's culture, I examine how middle-class American women reacted to domestic containment, the sexual revolution, feminism, the women's liberation movement, and the backlash against feminism. I also demonstrate the agency of women in negotiating their own identity, showing that the importance of women in the consumer culture gave them more economic and cultural power, and more space to negotiate their identity, however sexualized it became, even during reactionary periods which sought to contain them.

By reexamining gender and sexuality in postwar America, I also illuminate the complexity of the 1950s and 1960s, decades that has been unwittingly forced into diametrical opposition -- a syndrome Thomas Frank calls the binary narrative: 1950s conformist and 1960s radical. Evidence suggests that dissent, rebellion against conformity, and the absence of any truly hegemonic mass culture were central features of the 1950s. Frank highlighted the radical changes that occurred in business and advertising during the late 1950s and 1960s, known as the creative revolution. As Margot A. Henriksen demonstrated, a pervasive culture of dissent was also a central feature of American culture and society in

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the 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{14} Joel Foreman's study of 1950s culture exposed the radicalism and complexity of the decade's popular culture.\textsuperscript{15} Conversely, the 1960s, stereotyped as a decade of liberalism and radicalism, saw the emergence of the New Right with the Republican nomination of Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election and the election of President Richard M. Nixon in 1968. As David Farber demonstrated, the 1960s were complex and conflicted years that produced both radical and reactionary social trends.\textsuperscript{16}

Shaped by forces on the Left and the Right, a more sexualized yet liberated and empowered notion of American femininity developed. Today, the dangerously sensual woman permeates American popular culture, and this construct is the direct result of the complicated messages received by women and girls in the confusing and turbulent postwar decades. Is this woman a sellout to the goals of feminism, or is she feminism's heir? Only with a thorough understanding of the cultural and social messages which informed her creation can such a determination be made.

\textsuperscript{14} Margot A. Henriksen, \textit{Dr. Strangelove's America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
\textsuperscript{15} Joel Foreman, ed. \textit{The Other Fifties: Interrogating Midcentury American Icons} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
\textsuperscript{16} David Farber, ed. \textit{The Sixties: From Memory to History} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).
INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE
Cold War, Hot Love, and the Sexual Sell:
The Shaping of American Womanhood in Prefeminist America 1955-1965

In July 1959, two formidable cold war adversaries, American Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, faced off against one another amidst side-by-side refrigerators, dishwashers, and self-cleaning ovens in a battle of wits that has come to be known as the "kitchen debate." China had "fallen" to the communists. The Korean War had ended in a stalemate. The Vietnam War was soon to become America's hot point in the cold war. Yet, this verbal battle for global supremacy pit the virtues of freedom, individualism, achievement, and success embodied in America's laissez-faire capitalist democracy against the Soviet promise of equality and security under communism, and did so in the context of the "women's sphere" -- the kitchen.

A thaw in the cold war provided a rare opportunity for both sides to showcase their relative merits to the opposing country in the form of a technological exposition in the summer of 1959. The Soviets were, arguably, on the rise. They had surpassed America in nuclear missile technology, resulting in fears of a missile gap that were not completely unfounded, and they had successfully launched a series of satellites in 1957 -- Sputnik I, II, and III -- that put them ahead in technology. Similar advancements in propulsion technology led the Soviets to develop more advanced nuclear delivery systems. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) reports from 1958 and 1959 alerted the United States government to the fact that Sputnik III was a significant breakthrough in space technology and that the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) program in the Soviet Union was effective, formidable, and superior to that of the United
States. The capitalist system in America, by contrast, boasted color television sets, side-by-side refrigerators, rocket-like cars, and stay-at-home moms, all of which were attainable for a greater and greater percentage of the populace.

America was perceived as a fairly impotent nemesis in the eyes of the Soviets. When Nixon appeared in Moscow at the opening of the American technology exhibit that July, in a vain attempt to seduce the Soviets with materialism and gadgetry, he extolled the virtues of American technology, showcasing America's labor-saving devices for the American housewife exhibited in the show's centerpiece, a model split-level American ranch home. Women had choices, Nixon boasted, in the array of products available for the home. Khrushchev countered that one refrigerator would suffice, so long as it worked. A rather charming Khrushchev chided Nixon about the frivolous excess in American society, with a not-so-subtle pandering to missile gap fears in the post-Sputnik era. When asked what he thought about the exhibit, Khrushchev chided, "It is obvious to me that the construction crew is not yet finished," and he continued to taunt Nixon mercilessly. "Is this the best your country has to offer? And how long has she existed?"

The charismatic Soviet premier went on to point out that after only forty-two years, the Soviet Union stood almost on par with America in the production of consumer goods and ahead in the more daunting area of rocket science. Nixon encouraged open dialogue between the countries and proffered a plan whereby America would educate the Soviets about color broadcasting technology and the Soviets would divulge their knowledge of missile

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propellants. Khrushchev let out a hearty chuckle, vowing to surpass the United States in all areas. He promised with a mischievous grin, "We'll wave hi when we pass you by," shaking his hand in Nixon's rather bewildered face. 18

As Stephen J. Whitfield noted in his study of cold war culture, Khrushchev, along with much of the world, failed to realize that the same companies that were making America's consumer goods were also making cold war weapons. General Motors, Chrysler, General Electric, and Westinghouse operated as some of the largest defense contractors, and the American economy functioned as an intertwined military-industrial-consumer goods complex that was ironically similar in practice to that of its cold war adversary. In drumming up support for his federal highway project, President Dwight D. Eisenhower had remarked that what was good for General Motors was good for America, and he meant it quite literally. 19 That type of notion later translated into action with President John F. Kennedy's appointment of Ford Motor Company Chief Executive Officer Robert McNamara as Secretary of Defense.

What role were women to play in this new bipolar world order? That was a matter of debate, and one that grew more divisive as the cold war continued. Rosie the Riveter had long since been given the directive to leave the factory floor and return home. Women were needed as consumers of products, most of which were targeted to the American housewife. Much like the republican mothers of the Revolutionary era, postwar women faced the task of instilling civic virtue in children and safeguarding the home, this time from a threat more dire and disconcerting. Moreover, in the postwar era, the

19 Stephen J. Whitfield. The Culture of the Cold War (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 71-76.
construction of separate spheres for men and women became an integral factor in cold war posturing: the stay-at-home mother was a symbol of postwar prosperity and a ballot cast in favor of the supremacy of the capitalist system. American women could stay home, attend to the family, and still purchase the latest in technology while Soviet women could not. The individual, nuclear family in the 1950s and 1960s was held up as America's sacred social institution—and as a sign of distinction from Soviet communism—and this ideology filtered into policy making. America's long-standing reluctance to accept federally-funded "communal" day care or its refusal to ratify an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) can be directly traced to the cold war assertion that men and women were not comrades, that American womanhood was fundamentally different from manhood, and that the nuclear family with the mother at home was a defining feature of American life and a fortress against communist infiltration—one that would prove very tough to crack. However, the sexual revolution, an overall revolution of rising expectations in the postwar boom years, a growing spirit of individualism, and a new important role for women in the postwar consumer culture fomented a resurgence of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. In spite of itself, the democratic-capitalist American system fostered the growing power of women even as it sought to contain them.

The American woman in the years following World War II was caught in the crossfire of the cold war. Americans sheltered themselves inside the cocoon of the nuclear family as they repressed fears of annihilation in the atomic age. Worries about communist expansion fostered a growing cult of domesticity and conformity articulated by Elaine Tyler May as "domestic containment:" the woman was to stay home and keep the hearth safe from communist infiltration.

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and the man was to go to work and uphold the values of capitalist America. At the same time, the capitalist system increasingly depended upon women as consumers and wage earners to purchase the vast array of products available in postwar America. Fueled by the GI Bill and a thriving economy, more families achieved the elusive American dream – a house in the suburbs and all its attendant trimmings, which propelled an unprecedented number of people into the middle class.

The privileged role of women in the postwar consumer culture contributed to an ambivalence about female identity in the postwar era. Additionally, the postwar baby boom resulted in a lucrative children's market where girls and boys became more and more targeted as consumers and inundated with messages at younger and younger ages. Girls and women were taught by institutions such as school, church, and family to be submissive, demure, and deferential to the male head of household, be it husband or father. Betty Friedan would later call this part of the "feminine mystique." Yet, girls and women found empowerment in the new consumer culture which spoke directly to their needs and desires, to their sexuality and intellect. After the launch of the Sputnik series in 1957, American schools pushed girls and boys into math and science, but the culture continued to send contradictory messages intimating that such pursuits were unfeminine and that cultivating a superior intellect was tantamount to spinsterhood for women.

These mixed messages began during World War II. Government campaigns during the war had encouraged women to work in industrial positions or in clerical jobs to support the war effort, but the campaigns positioned the contributions as sacrifice, not opportunity. Such patriotic propaganda generally upheld the ideal of separate spheres, advocating women
as emergency workers but falling short of supporting the notion of long-term career positions for women in American society. The underlying assumption was that women would prefer to be in the home, that industrial work was a burden and a sacrifice, and that women would happily return to domesticity after serving their country.

The assumptions proved somewhat off the mark. By the mid-1950s, many educated middle-class women as well as working-class women who gave up their aspirations would grow to resent domestic containment and the loss of employment opportunities for women. For many working-class and nonwhite women, war work had provided an unprecedented chance to earn a decent living. Working-class women in general, many of whom would have had to work anyway, resented the loss of high-paying jobs. Black women were the hardest hit and the first to lose their lucrative positions. A survey of women who worked in industry during the war conducted by the Women's Bureau in 1946 noted that three out of four women wanted to stay at their industrial jobs, even though they did not want to displace returning veterans. Women themselves, it seemed, were conflicted. Regardless, women's aspirations were put on hold when the GIs returned. World War II gave way to the cold war with its mandate to present an image of a patriotic, superior, harmonious culture free from racial, gender, and economic strife. In the early postwar years, a battle-fatigued America for the most part complied.

In the early postwar years, the GI Bill helped placate women to some degree by providing cheap housing and education for veterans and by catapulting families from many socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds into the middle-class. A booming economy and the promise of upward mobility

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sweetened the pot. In the face of House UnAmerican Activities Committee (HUAC) investigations and McCarthyism, middle America adopted the mantle of conformity. This was bolstered by fears of communist expansion in Europe and Asia and by the Soviets' success in shattering America's nuclear monopoly. The cultural ideal held out in the 1950s was that of a white, middle-class family with the man working outside the home and the woman tending to home and family; it was not representative of the majority of households. Regardless, mass media and advertising generally upheld this ideal, especially with the absorption of a new and powerful medium into American homes.

Between the early 1950s and the early 1960s, television inundated Americans with visual representations of cultural ideals, many of which were female. Women in a wide variety of age groups, ethnicities, and socioeconomic groups were literally steeped in the images that were broadcast into their living rooms. Indeed, the introduction of television into the American home was perhaps the single biggest cultural change in postwar American history, and one that unwittingly grew to empower as well as contain women in the postwar decades as the industry moved toward consolidation and cooperation with the government and away from controversial subjects. Television, unlike film, was born into a climate of repression and anti-communism during the early years of the cold war, a climate that unwittingly gave women a higher degree of visibility over the decades as programs and commercial sponsors looked to safe domestic themes and family target audiences.

As William Boddy's study of television in the 1950s demonstrated, a dramatic transformation took place in television production, sponsorship, and corporate structure over the course of the 1950s. In television's experimental

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stage in the early 1950s, as scholars such as Boddy and Lynn Spigel\textsuperscript{23} have noted, programs were ethnically and socioeconomically diverse. Programming reflected the tastes and values of a wide array of writers and producers who could get their products aired more easily before the consolidation of the industry into the "big three" networks of ABC, CBS, and NBC. After the mid-1950s, networks increasingly controlled the production of the television series themselves and their distribution to local stations, a pattern that persisted until the late 1970s and the introduction of cable television. Vertical integration of the industry furthered the monopolization of the airwaves, and this created tight supply and booming demand for advertising sponsorships, especially during prime time. This resulted in a shift in the mid-1950s in television advertising from the single-sponsor format to the multiple-sponsor format -- selling advertising time in "spot" increments -- by the late 1950s\textsuperscript{24} Demand greatly outstripped supply, and television network executives soon had advertisers eating out of their hands. Increasingly, women were seen as the target audience for advertisers and programs, and their cultural and economic power consequently increased.

The federal government seemed happy to sanction this virtual network monopoly. Those looking to dominate the medium benefited from the overall climate of fear and repression during the cold war. Political strong-arming and blacklisting started when the medium was in its infancy. In 1950, the publication of \textit{Red Channels: The Report on Communist Influence in Radio and Television} targeted Communist party members and people who, it suggested, were too naive to realize they were being used to promote the communist agenda. They cited

\textsuperscript{24}Boddy, 15-42.
mostly the more avant-garde dramatic series, thus further propelling the industry toward more sanctioned themes of domesticity and away from controversy.\textsuperscript{25} The publication listed some 151 entertainment industry professionals, many of whom had been pillars of the radio industry and instrumental in championing New Deal reforms as well as opposing fascism. Although most people in the business considered the allegations baseless, the report had a profound impact. Consumers pressured sponsors to cancel shows and careers were ruined.\textsuperscript{26}

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC)\textsuperscript{27} encouraged industry consolidation, likely because of government fears of subversion and the desire to have control over mass communications in the event of a crisis. Networks were not the only ones happy to cooperate with the government. Advertising executives championed the potential of television to promote patriotic consumerism and fuel the economy, realizing that no other medium could reach so many people directly for so little cost. Advertisers contended that direct-to-consumer advertising was paramount to keeping the postwar economy growing. The government, eager to stave off another postwar depression, let American businesses have what they needed to keep going. As early as 1951, advertising agencies believed that the entire nuclear family needed to be targeted -- especially young mothers and their children.\textsuperscript{28} The stifling of controversial themes and the intentional targeting of women and families resulted in an increasingly more powerful role for women as consumers of

\textsuperscript{25} Boddy, 97-99.


\textsuperscript{27} The United States government formed the FCC in 1934 in order to regulate interstate and international communications transmitted by radio, television, wire, and satellite. For more information, see the official FCC website at www.fcc.gov.

\textsuperscript{28} Boddy, 155-156.
television programs and the wares they peddled. This only increased throughout the decade.

As Lynn Spigel demonstrated in *Make Room For TV,* consumers played a vital role in negotiating the absorption of television into American society, beginning when television entered homes in the early 1950s. Consumers, many of whom were women, helped shape programming and prompted the development of the situation comedy, or sitcom. Women in particular were charged with policing the new medium: how much was too much for children, where would the set be placed, how would it impact family life, how many sets the household should have, and what kind of programming children should watch were all questions that middle-class female heads-of-household struggled to answer in the early 1950s. By the late 1950s, women assumed even more vital roles as viewers and consumers given how sponsorship of television programs shifted over the decade. Initially, most were single-sponsor image campaigns by companies like U.S. Steel or promotions for big-ticket items like automobiles targeted to the entire family. As the decade progressed, the advertising base shifted -- in part due to the implementation of multiple spot formats, in part due to changes in programming and audience composition -- to smaller-ticket items like food, cleaning supplies, and toiletries. Advertisers grew to recognize women as the primary decision-makers for the purchase of these items and programming followed suit.

Although for the most part television critics consider the later part of the 1950s to be a dark period in television history, as it spelled the dawn of mediocrity and conformity, further analysis reveals this to be a complex era in which cultural ideals were negotiated, challenged, and constructed. The most

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29 Spigel, 1-10.
powerful medium in America served as a template to experiment with emerging female identities in the postwar era, and television continued both to reflect and prefigure social change for the rest of the century. Although most television shows upheld the status quo, exceptions existed because of the power of consumption.

It is remarkable that in as repressive a climate as supposedly existed the most popular show of the 1950s featured a former member of the Communist Party, a female who stopped at nothing to get her show produced. As Gerard Jones demonstrated in his study of sitcoms, *I Love Lucy* was the show that, according to the stereotypes of the 1950s, should never have been. Producers were reluctant to back Lucille Ball’s idea, convinced that audiences would not believe she was married to Desi Arnaz, her Cuban husband who was to play her fictional husband on the show. The couple then created Desilu Productions and funded nearly all of the costs of producing the pilot. Even after its acceptance by network personnel, they had trouble finding sponsors, but Phillips Morris finally decided to take a gamble. Because of their resistance to moving to New York from California, the couple decided to forego live broadcast and use telefilm before a live audience -- thus, they alone prompted the shift of television production from New York to Hollywood and the transition to filmed rather than live broadcasts.30 In 1953, it was revealed that Lucille Ball had told HUAC, during a 1952 investigation, that she had been a member of the Communist Party in the 1930s. Although public reaction was initially mixed, the couple weathered the attack after a direct appeal to their fans. The show proved so profitable that it did not lose its sponsor, and Lucy won back Americans’ hearts.31

31 Whitfield 168-169. For an analysis of specific episodes of *I Love Lucy*, see Chapter Two of this dissertation.
How far could television go in the 1950s in challenging mainstream American values? *The Phil Silvers Show* seems to have pushed the envelope a bit beyond the pale. It aired from 1956 to 1959, and found an audience for its biting satire on military life in an era when most television and film producers avoided any sort of controversy, let alone mockery of the military-industrial complex. The show featured Sergeant Ernie Bilko, a con artist who exposed and capitalized on all the shortcomings, waste, and hypocrisy in the military bureaucracy. That it was produced at all is rather a minor miracle. It was profitable and successful until it was suddenly axed: CBS chose to kill the series while it was still going strong in 1959, a decision the network billed as financial rather than ideological. Gerard Jones speculates that CBS President Bill Paley, perhaps subconsciously, was growing more uncomfortable with the series, or that it may have "cut a little too close to the heart of that complex of which CBS was a part," and that its cancellation signaled that CBS was trying to shed its liberal label. Furthermore, contemporaneous quiz show scandals compromised the television industry's integrity, likely making a con man protagonist a shaky bet. The policy of mutual coexistence likely contributed as well. In an era when the United States and the Soviet Union opened their doors and hawked their wares in a global ideological sales pitch, Ernie Bilko was an unseemly spokesperson for the American dream.

CBS's decision seemed somewhat prophetic. By 1962, the military-industrial complex had launched Telstar, the first telecommunications satellite. The industry set its sights on the international market as Kennedy's administration sought to spread democracy, capitalism, and the benefits of American society around the globe -- and television executives rose to the occasion. Congress passed the Communications Satellite Act of 1962, which

32 Gerard Jones, 117-118 and Barnouw, 154.
privatized the international satellite industry and authorized the creation of the Communications Satellite Corporation (COMSAT), a private conglomerate of major communications industry giants working in collaboration with the United States government. Although COMSAT was responsible for negotiating with foreign governments to establish communications in those countries, the Kennedy administration offered foreign nations economic and military aid to encourage their participation.  

The Kennedy administration also took an active role in policing television, with Kennedy’s FCC head Newton Minow blasting the industry for producing a "vast wasteland" of programming and advertising. His charge resulted to some degree in an improvement in program quality, in that networks added more news and educational programming to their schedules. However, industry executives knew that "big brother" had now become an active participant in their lives: that same year a Senate investigation of the television drama Bus Stop (1961-1962) for gratuitous violence prompted the dismissal of ABC’s president. His replacement carefully learned from the past and offered a more innocuous line-up for the following year. Regardless of its eventual demise, given television’s political timidity, the popularity and success of The Phil Silvers Show had served as further evidence of the power of consumption and the complexity of the 1950s. In the "rebellious" 1960s, CBS replaced it with The Dick Van Dyke Show, with its comfortable theme of domesticity, leaving more room for women to negotiate their new identity in a safe, upwardly mobile domestic context.  

Women of different age groups responded differently to the media-sanctioned mandate for domesticity. Middle-aged women in the mid-1950s to mid-1960s had had a taste of empowerment during World War II and resented

33 Barnouw, 310-313.  
34 Gerard Jones, 146-147.
the pressure to limit themselves to the domestic sphere. Although married
women were encouraged to return to and remain in the domestic sphere,
statistics show that the number of working married women actually increased in
the 1950s, especially among older women. By 1960, three out of four married
women worked outside the home, a twofold increase over 1940. Most were
over the age of thirty-five and most worked part-time in typically female jobs
like clerical work, sales, and banking rather than in the professions. No doubt
some worked out of economic necessity, with both the husband and wife feeling
a sense of inadequacy for failing to live up to the middle-class ideal as pictured on
television sitcoms. However, women with older children also went back to
work for a sense of fulfillment. In contrast, younger women in their teens and
twenties dedicated themselves in greater numbers to domesticity. Marriage ages
plummeted, women dropped out of college to raise families, and birth rates rose
dramatically — these statistics all falling way out of line with earlier trends toward
smaller families and rising marriage ages. The "traditional" 1950s family was,
insofar as it existed at all, a statistical and historical anomaly. Nonetheless, as
Stephanie Coontz demonstrates in her work on postwar families, The Way We
Never Were, popular sitcoms of the 1950s set the standard for suburban
propriety, encouraging consumerism as a patriotic defense against
communism. Some of the material gains visible on television were real.
Wages had increased, more Americans had bought homes thanks to the GI Bill,
and the government had poured money into highway construction and
education. However, as Coontz points out, many families were left out of the

35 Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life
36 Mintz and Kellogg, 178-179.
37 Stephanie Coontz, The Way We Never Were: American Families in the Nostalgia Trap (New York: Basic
38 Coontz, 28-29.
boom. Sixty percent of Americans over the age of sixty-five lived considerably below the middle-class income level and twenty-five percent of families were poor. Television phased out minority representations over the decade at the same time that America's percentage of minority residents grew. This fostered feelings of resentment for those who were left out, or alternatively, feelings of failure among American families who could not live up to the ideal.

After the launch of the Sputnik series in 1957, some Americans had begun to question whether America's obsession with consumerism and the domesticity of American women served the best interests of the country. Generally, by the late 1950s, the scourge of McCarthyism had faded and Americans more freely voiced their dissent. Although paranoia regarding internal subversion had subsided, fears of the Soviets had not, with worry about the "missile gap" and skepticism about the relevance of massive retaliation leaving Americans somewhat insecure. As the Eisenhower era passed the torch to a new generation, as the Civil Rights movement made gains, as intellectuals began openly to express their disdain for conformity and nuclear proliferation, and as massive retaliation gave way to a flexible response, American women seized the opportunity to forge a new identity. President John F. Kennedy formed the Commission on the Status of Women in 1961 as intellectuals and social critics challenged domestic containment, arguing that women constituted a vast untapped national resource, one that was perhaps being put to better use by the Soviets. This resonated with certain sectors of the female population. Many middle-class housewives felt dissatisfied and unfulfilled, having given up their education and career aspirations to attend to domestic needs.

39 Coontz, 29-30.
These sentiments crystalized with the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. In her groundbreaking book, Friedan identified the "problem that has no name," alerting America to the fact that educated women forced to go back to the home or to stay at home were in large numbers unhappy, unfulfilled, and kept from realizing their potential due to an outmoded set of values. Although published in 1963, her book was based on research from the late 1950s and thus provided valuable insight into the thoughts and ideas of women during that decade. She deconstructed the assumptions of Sigmund Freud and Margaret Mead, lauded Alfred Kinsey for linking female sexual gratification to higher educational levels, dismissed the notion that a focus on sexuality would cure the bored housewife, exposed the marketing tactics which perpetuated the "feminine mystique," and called on women to join in a renewed mission to realize their full potential. Her study has generally been credited with launching the modern postwar feminist movement, although her argument appealed primarily to a select group of college-educated, upper middle and middle-class white women, as many nonwhite and working-class women never could have afforded the luxury of staying home in the first place.

Regardless, the publication of her book was a watershed in women's history, and it signaled that by 1963 women were ready to air their grievances in public rather than in private. Many women of all classes and races showed their frustration with the feminine mystique and the media perpetuating it. College-educated women were not contented to be confined to the home. Working-class women of all races and ethnicities stuck in menial labor positions struggled to conform to an unrealistic postwar middle-class ideal as poverty, inflation, and the

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41 For more information on these sentiments, see bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin To Center* (Boston: South End, 1984).
pressure to consume a vast array of consumer goods made women's incomes increasingly necessary, a fact reported by Kennedy's Commission. Yet, women remained continually relegated to low paying jobs or received lower pay for the same work. The Commission argued for equal pay for equal work, paid maternity leave, and federally-funded day care, but failed to endorse an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The feminist movement in the mid-to late 1960s would go on to fight for these goals.

The commission's findings received very little attention from the media, however, which proved much more interested in forwarding a new feminine ideal constructed on the model of First Lady Jackie Kennedy. As women quietly went about their paid employment, and as a growing minority of women, most of them middle-aged, started to articulate dissatisfaction with the status quo, most women in the early 1960s, married and single, struggled to maintain their femininity, uphold the feminine ideal, and still find personal fulfillment. More women looked to the bedroom than the boardroom to find that fulfillment.

The 1950s and early 1960s also witnessed the dawn of the sexual revolution, a precursor to the women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s -- thus further complicating gender identity in America. Women in the 1950s and early 1960s were encouraged to embrace their sexuality as a result of changing values in American society. After the Kinsey report and other literature on sexuality in the 1950s propelled marital sex lives into the spotlight and made it fashionable for women to enjoy sex, women in the 1950s and early 1960s felt willing to be more sexually exciting and adventurous, especially within marriage, in addition to fulfilling their roles as housewives and mothers. But as Betty Friedan and others had noted, the unleashing of the female libido seemed

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42 Woloch, 486-490.
to have a chilling effect on middle America's men. As a result, in the early 1960s, many middle-class women, especially young wives and single women, increasingly worried about their sex appeal and femininity. As my research demonstrates, they struggled to distance themselves from any association with traditional feminism or women's rights activism. The feminists of the early decade were generally perceived as unsexy, unfeminine battle-axes. Average American women, especially those in their teens and twenties, wanted nothing to do with those images. Likewise, the image of the androgynous female "comrade" of the Soviet Union held little appeal for most American women. At home, in the public sphere and in the mass media, women above all wanted to maintain their femininity and their sex appeal, whether they were on the campaign trail or at a school board meeting. Most women in the 1950s and early 1960s seemed cognizant of the fact that they played a vital role in cold war America and wanted to do their part to bolster democracy and capitalism, but as the 1950s gave way to the 1960s, it became increasingly difficult to agree upon how that role should be played. The debate was fueled by fears of a missile gap after 1957, which again prompted some people to argue that women's intellects could be put to better use, even comparing American women to their Soviet counterparts.

The embracing of female libido in American society was compromised by a new ideology of bachelorhood which began with Hugh Hefner's launch of Playboy magazine in 1953 and the subsequent recognition of sex as a vital and virtually unlimited market. As John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman noted in their history of sexuality, Intimate Matters, Hefner's target audience were upwardly mobile single men, for whom marriage, according to Hefner, was a financial trap. Hefner urged men to eschew outmoded Puritanical values
regarding sex and to indulge their desires, redefining premarital sex and the bachelor lifestyle as chic, desirable, and a signifier of financial success rather than a sign of deviance and depravation. By the late 1950s, the magazine had a circulation of over one million, and by the mid-1960s, Hefner was worth an estimated $100 million. That Hefner found such a large audience for his product in the 1950s was but another signal that Americans hovered on the brink of change and that society evidenced less sexual intolerance than some may have believed. Hefner certainly did his part, however, to fuel the economy and promote notions of the good life in America. In that regard, he upheld the credo of cold war America -- at least he was not a communist. His success spurred on others and resulted in many ways in a cheap, pornographic assimilation of female sexuality into American society. Moreover, sex became a lucrative market with seemingly limitless potential.

Perhaps in response to the bachelor archetype, American culture increasingly championed a new, sexy, single girl media image in the early 1960s. The year before Friedan's study was published, Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl* promoted an alternative to domesticity in a more liberated package. Her book encouraged young women to have careers and marry later in life, suggesting that they ignore the scare tactics in women's magazines. However, she counseled them on how to be sexy, alluring, and sophisticated so they could marry not just any man, but the right man who would secure for them upward mobility, fulfillment, and the good life. Young women in their teens and twenties struggled to reconcile the many conflicting images they received from the popular culture, their boyfriends, their parents, and older

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women. Did "good girls" engage in premarital sex? If so, when was it acceptable? What would be the consequences of "going all the way" or of not doing so? Despite changing values, the consequences of premarital sex in many instances continued to be characterized by the same old double-standard regarding sexual mores and desires for men and women.

Raised in the 1950s with contested images of femininity, and steeped in a feminine ideal that was increasingly youthful and provocative as the 1950s gave way to the 1960s, young married women struggled to embody new definitions of womanhood, aware that they were competing with sexy single girls for their husbands' attention. Married women in general sought to reconcile the needs of family with the rising tide of individualism and expectations for personal fulfillment, a dialogue that played out in the pages of women's magazines and in self-help literature. Additionally, married women who did not work outside the home worried that their husbands might stray, surrounded as they were by attractive, single women in the workplace. Singles, teens, and young girls absorbed conflicting messages from the culture about what it meant to be a woman, but over the years the definition became more sexual. By the mid-1960s, a "dangerously sensual" feminine ideal was taking shape.

In the products of popular culture, competing but similarly feminine and sexually-charged images of womanhood were forged in the context of the cold war and the sexual revolution. These female representations posed a stark contrast to the antifeminine Soviet stereotypes and served as prototypes which were steeped to some degree in Kinsey and Playboy notions of American womanhood. One was the "young elegant" new frontier wife, exemplified by the classy yet sensual Jackie Kennedy, a marked departure from her predecessor, the matronly Mamie Eisenhower. This transformation was
mirrored on television which had its own "matriarchal makeover." By the late 1950s, when sitcoms had moved to the suburbs and lost their ethnic and racial diversity, something else had also changed: middle-aged, maternal matriarchs like those depicted on the earlier sitcoms *Beulah* (1950-1953) and *The Goldbergs* (1949-1954) were, for the most part, replaced by attractive young wives who looked increasingly more like women in television commercials. The wives grew sexier, younger, and more alluring as the 1950s gave way to the 1960s, this transition foreshadowed by the character of Lucy Ricardo in *I Love Lucy* (1951-1961) and furthered by characters such as Laura Petrie of *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (1961 to 1966) and Morticia Addams of *The Addams Family* (1964-1966). The sexy young wife archetype was fashioned against another competing female identity, the sexy single girl, who found cultural construction in such diverse characters as Holly Golightly in the 1961 film *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Playboy Playmates, the Bond girls who competed for 007's affections, and in the brief but significant lead character in the series *Honey West* (1965-1966). These prototypes -- constructed, negotiated, and popularized in the media -- heeded the call of the sexual revolution in different ways, both feeding on the fixation with youth, sex appeal, and beauty.

In Chapter Two, "New Frontiers and Flexible Responses: Sex, Domesticity and the Shattered Mystique," I chronicle the struggle of married women to absorb and respond to the myriad messages they received. Using women's magazines, mass media, and advice literature from the era, I examine these messages and the ways women responded to them, struggling to be both flexible about their morals and responsive to the needs of their husbands and families. Through this analysis, I trace the transformation of the married woman's image in the culture. In Chapter Three, "Deconstructing Whore-
Madonna: Singles, Sex, and The Barbie Revolution," I discuss the ways in which the single girl transitioned from a spinster in the 1950s to a sex symbol in the early 1960s, epitomized by the 1959 debut of Barbie. I discuss the impact of Barbie on American society and analyze her cultural significance. I then discuss the sexual revolution and its impact on single life. I examine how young college-aged women, the first wave of baby boomers to reach maturity, struggled to adjust to the new morality, eventually adopting their own set of mores and values. This foreshadowed the emergence of a generation gap that would widen in the late 1960s. Additionally, I trace the rise of the sexy, single girl as a new cultural icon by the mid-1960s. She was sometimes vulnerable, sometimes empowered, but always desirable.

By the mid-1960s, the impact of the sexual revolution, the rebirth of feminism, the constraints of the cold war on American feminism, and the shattering of the feminine mystique left female identity in crisis. As a singles culture grew in the cities and then disseminated across America through film, television, fiction, advice literature, and women's magazines, married women knew they faced constant competition with not only single women but with the single lifestyle in general.45 Single women often held onto traditional values regarding the goal of marriage, but they appeared confused about the role sex should play in sealing the deal. As D'Emilio and Freedman commented:

American women were also expected to be more than mothers and housekeepers. Marital ideals prescribed that she be an erotic companion to her husband, that the happiness of marriage would grow in proportion to the sexual magic generated between husband and wife. By the 1960s, Playboy Playmates and sexy single girls added another, more troubling ingredient to this sexual stew. Wives could look with concern at the sexual competition they faced from women who did not have to change

45 D’Emilio and Freedman, 304-306.
diapers or cook for a family. For her part, the single woman might forever question her femininity, lacking as she was the central attribute of motherhood. Whether dutiful wife or alluring single, the American woman was left to question whether she made the grade.46

By the mid-1960s, both married women and single women could read one overarching message clearly: it was easier to get what women wanted if they were sexy, beautiful, and dangerously sensual. The Barbie Revolution was in full swing.

46 D'Emilio and Freedman, 309.
CHAPTER TWO
New Frontiers and Flexible Responses: Sex, Domesticity, and the Shattered Mystique

You must walk feminine
talk feminine
smile and beguile feminine
utilize your femininity
that's what every girl should know
if she wants to catch a beau.47

The conflicting messages bombarding married women between 1955 and 1965 were rather staggering by any assessment. Through the pages of women's magazines and advice literature, on television, in film, at home, and in the workplace, married women absorbed a number of new and powerful messages having to do with their sexuality, their choices regarding career and family, and their importance to the future of the country. This examination of the 1950s and 1960s reveals two intertwined decades in which female identity was in flux. Far from traveling a straight line from domestic containment in the 1950s to activism and liberation in the 1960s, female identity formation was a process much more complex and nuanced. Women took some steps forward and some steps back, they continually renegotiated their identity, and they fostered at once progress and a repressive backlash even in the "rebellious" Sixties. This gendered ambivalence was exemplified by the emergence of Nixon's "silent majority" and the New Right by the mid-1960s during the rebirth of feminism, and was expressed quite tangibly in a virulent antifeminist backlash occurring during the height of the women's liberation movement in the 1970s.

In the 1950s, American women were inundated with messages from parents, teachers, women's magazines, psychologists, doctors, and mass media

regarding their proper role in society. The stakes were high in the mid-1950s: the Soviet Union was a formidable enemy expanding its influence around the globe, and America needed to maintain its technological supremacy. American society for the most part agreed that the proper place for women was in the home, and many women, trying to comply, struggled to find fulfillment in the domestic sphere. Betty Friedan labeled this cultural phenomenon the "feminine mystique." She defined it as follows:

The suburban housewife — she was the dream image of the young American woman and the envy, it was said, of women all over the world. The American housewife — freed by science and labor-saving appliances from the drudgery, the dangers of childbirth and the illnesses of her grandmother. She was healthy, beautiful, educated, concerned only about her husband, her children, her home. She had found true feminine fulfillment. As a housewife and mother, she was respected as a full and equal partner to man in his world. She was free to choose automobiles, clothes, appliances, supermarkets; she had everything that women ever dreamed of.48

The American woman was, in fact, an integral part of America's cold war foreign policy. As Friedan noted, experts frequently compared American women to their counterparts in other countries and frequently to women in the Soviet Union. Their privileged lifestyles served as evidence that the American system of free enterprise, which produced the material prosperity and technological ingenuity which made such lives of leisure possible, was superior to communism. America's democratic traditions filtered down to the home, where women were partners in marriages based on equality. Friedan claimed that in the period after World War II, "this mystique of feminine fulfillment became the cherished and self-perpetuating core of contemporary American

culture. The myth was fueled by myriad articles in women's magazines which glorified the American housewife, marriage counselors who misunderstood and oversimplified complex psychological concepts like penis envy, an educational system that reinforced the myth of female inferiority, and an advertising industry which exploited the growing fixation with femininity and sexual attractiveness in order to reap profits for America's corporations.

In a chapter entitled "The Sexual Sell," Friedan exposed the way in which American businesses indoctrinated women. She noted that, although she did not believe there was an orchestrated conspiracy among advertising executives and corporate leaders to return women to the domestic sphere in order to consume their products, "the business of producing and selling and investing in business for profit . . . began to be confused with the purpose of our nation," resulting in the "subversion of women's lives in America to the ends of business." Friedan stopped short of making the connection between corporate America, the defense industry, and government policy. A thriving economy was a vital component for success in the cold war. American women played a key role in cold war America in the 1950s, both in terms of the consumption of consumer goods in order to fuel America's corporations and consequently its military might and in terms of their privileged lifestyles which were used as a marketing tool for the supremacy of the American system.

To find out exactly how marketers effected the indoctrination of American women, she visited the leading practitioner of Motivation Research (MR), Ernest Dichter. MR, a marketing methodology of the 1950s, employed

49 Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, 18.
pseudopsychological techniques to uncover the subconscious desires and insecurities of the American consumer. Advertisers then used this information to sell products, preying on those insecurities. Dichter gave Friedan unrestricted access to his research facility. A survey conducted in 1945 by Dichter's organization set the tone for marketers into the next decade. The survey results, based on a sample of 4,500 middle-class women with high-school or college educations, typecast women into three categories. The first group, fifty-one percent of American women, were classified as the "true housewives," women who had "little, if any, desire for a position outside the home." This group comprised the largest target market for household appliances, but they could be troublesome given their resistance to new labor-saving products. Dichter surmised that they feared such appliances would diminish their own importance in the home. The second category,"career women," Dichter claimed was a growing minority and one that advertisers should keep from expanding any further. These women showed little interest in products for the home and, if interested, were overly critical of them. The third type, the "balanced housewife," was the advertiser's ideal consumer. These women had some outside interests and welcomed labor-saving devices that freed up some of their day, but they liked to retain executive control over domestic affairs. His organization counseled marketers to make a concerted effort to increase the number of "balanced housewives" and decrease the number of "career women."55

By the mid-1950s, market research demonstrated that corporations had achieved their goal of eclipsing the career woman, with surveys reporting a dramatic decrease in women who categorized themselves as such. The increased number of "balanced housewives," however, soon posed problems for

marketers. Researchers warned that "she tries to use her own mind and her own judgment. She is fast getting away from judging by collective memory or majority standards. She is developing independent standards." In order to combat this, marketers began to target teenagers and young brides with less education and confidence. The idea was to indoctrinate girls and women at a young age with the notion that happiness was linked to consumerism, to create the desire for material possessions early in life, and to link such acquisitions to personal fulfillment. Additionally, market researchers realized that housewives in the mid-to-late 1950s placed a great deal of significance on their sex lives, and that sometimes sex did not live up to expectations. Advertisers decided to "put the libido back into advertising" by letting the housewife see herself not as simply a wife but as a woman. Marketers created the "sexual sell" in order to tie consumerism to sexuality and to capitalize on America's growing obsession with sex appeal. This resulted in a more sexualized brand of femininity being disseminated in America's mass marketing, and television and film followed suit. Friedan credited Dichter and the motivation researchers for being more astute than the sociologists and marriage counselors. At least, she claimed, they recognized that American housewives needed more than home and family to find fulfillment. However, she criticized them for encouraging women to find this fulfillment through consumerism and sexual bliss in the domestic sphere rather than outside the home. One common theme continued in American culture from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, and that was an increasing fixation on sexually appealing femininity and beauty which spread most effectively

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throughout society once the mass media found a way to penetrate America's living rooms through television advertising and comedic series.

The most successful sitcom of the 1950s, *I Love Lucy* (1951-1961) set a precedent for women in the decades to come and foreshadowed future trends in American society. The show revolved around Lucy and Ricky Ricardo, the fictional husband and wife played by the real life couple, Lucille Ball and Cuban-born Desi Arnaz. Ricky was a band leader and Lucy remained, much to her chagrin, a housewife. Fred and Ethel Mertz were their landlords and best friends, a childless older couple who constantly hurled insults at one another. The show's contents served as evidence that television in the 1950s did not always uphold the feminine mystique or the stereotype of the 1950s as a conformist decade in American history. *I Love Lucy* became the most popular sitcom of the 1950s, yet its themes were often at odds with the ideology of domestic containment. Lucy longed to break out of domesticity and into show business, and many of the episodes revolved around her failed attempts to do so. The urban setting was typical of sitcoms in 1951, but by the mid-1950s most shows had moved to the suburbs. The Ricardos, however, remained in the city longer than most families, even after the birth of their son, Little Ricky.

Moreover, Lucy became the first female protagonist on television with sex appeal. She worried about her weight, became jealous of show girls, enjoyed a passionate relationship with her husband, and refused to be contented with her role as a housewife. The show, set in an urban apartment building, scored a hit with the public at a time when efforts were being made to homogenize Americans and move them into the suburbs. It stayed popular into the late 1950s as other shows featuring urban ethnics disappeared from the scene (with
the show winning Emmy awards into 1956). It showcased a mixed marriage and served as a testament to the power of rugged individualism, as Ricky Ricardo maintained his career as a bandleader in an era of corporate conformity. In stark contrast to the white suburbanites who inhabited most of sitcom America, this couple was volatile, sexually charged, and nonconformist. In fact, Lucy served as a forerunner to the dangerously sensual female protagonist, with her sexuality tempered and rendered less threatening by her comic genius.

The theme of Lucy's restlessness in the domestic sphere started early in the series' history. A 1951 episode called "The Audition" plays out the saga in classic format. Ricky's show is being targeted for a television special, and the network brass and potential sponsors are coming to view the show. The episode begins in the home, with Lucy needling Ricky for a chance to participate. She opens with a challenge: "You'll never be a success because you don't have a woman in your show" and she goes on to mention the Burns and Allen show as an example. Ricky counters that he does not want his wife in show business; rather, he wants her to clean house and be a mother to his children. She makes faces at him which he cannot see but the audience can, and it is clear that Lucy is not going to take this lying down. This likely felt subversively refreshing to the many women who had had a taste of empowerment during World War II and now found themselves back in the home.

Lucy's big chance comes when Buffo the Clown has an accident and shows up at Lucy's house to convalesce. Lucy decides that, since the show must go on, she should take his place and provide the comic relief needed for Ricky's act. Cleverly, this leaves her an out -- she is coming to Ricky's rescue, standing by her man. When she arrives, she steals the show, making even the stoneface

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sponsors crack a smile. In the end, they offer Lucy a contract, and Ricky feels slighted. Having tasted victory, she returns to the domestic sphere and offers to hand him his slippers, cook, clean, and be a mother to his children. In other words, she exudes femininity with all the trimmings. Although she is eventually returned to the domestic sphere in this as in most episodes, an important transformation has taken place. Lucy chooses to reject the contract rather than undermine her husband's masculinity. However, she proves herself worthy of the men's sphere over the course of the show. The message to American women was that men knew women could make it in their public sphere, but that doing so would destroy domestic harmony and undermine the marital relationship.61

A similar sentiment played out somewhat more directly in the classic 1952 episode "Job Switching," in which Lucy and Ethel try their hand at paid employment and Fred and Ricky stay home and tend to the chores. The story begins with an argument about Lucy overdrawing her checking account, after which Lucy decides to get a job. Ricky goes along with her idea, suggesting that maybe if she got a job she would realize the value of a dollar. She argues that she works very hard at home for no recognition, giving voice to a classic feminist complaint. After Ethel and Fred join in the argument, both couples decide to participate in the work-swapping. With no experience and no skills, Lucy and Ethel end up working in a candy factory on an assembly line. The female foreperson is a shrew and a slave-driver. The work is repetitious and taxing. They deliver some laughs trying to keep up with their assembly line duties, but the message was mixed, sobering, and likely not too off the mark: domesticity was preferable to menial labor. When Betty Friedan argued for the

61 "The Audition," I Love Lucy, 19 November 1951, CBS. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
rights of women to find fulfillment in the public sphere, her primary concern involved educated women who would not be working on factory assembly lines, but rather in the professions. The episode exposed the limitations for women who had no job skills or education. Such women were equally vulnerable in the workplace and in the domestic sphere.

Back at home, however, Ricky and Fred are not faring very well either. After Lucy wakes the first day to a flawless breakfast, she uncovers the fact that Ricky has ordered out. He proceeds to make a disaster area out of the kitchen and ruins her clothes. Once Lucy comes home, she and Ricky admit that swapping places gave them an appreciation for the other’s situation. Women's work, once again, gained acknowledgment through the episode, in a way that did not often happen in American society. "Job Switching" noted that staying home is work -- hard work -- and that women's labor deserves recognition. This sentiment fell in line with traditional feminist aspirations for validation. Moreover, the episode crossed socioeconomic boundaries -- something television would later abandon for more than a decade -- as it tapped into the difficult reality of menial labor for working-class women. These women would grow to resent the complaints of Betty Friedan and other white, middle-class women as staying home remained a luxury they could never afford let alone reject. Lucy's efforts at least recognized their plight. The episode also played out the fantasy of women longing to return to work or to enter paid employment in a safe, vicarious manner, throwing women a bone by upholding their superiority in attending to household affairs while still cautioning them against indulging the fantasy.62

62 "Job Switching," I Love Lucy, 15 September 1952, CBS. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
In similar fashion, "Lucy Hires a Maid," which aired in 1953, highlighted the difficulty in taking care of home and family after having a baby. Lucy is exhausted after being up all night, so Ricky decides to let her get a maid. The maid -- Mrs. Porter -- proceeds to boss Lucy around, and Lucy proves incapable of gaining the upper hand. Lucy appears meek, submissive, and traditionally feminine. Mrs. Porter, by contrast, is matronly, assertive, and domineering in an unflattering way. After she realizes that Mrs. Porter is scamming her -- eating her out of house and home and not doing her duties -- Lucy needs to get Ricky to fire her. She now knows that she is not the type to have a maid. Some people are cut out for "champagne and caviar," but she's the "beer and pretzel" type. This voyeuristic foray into the world of affluent society appealed to middle Americans in the 1950s, assuring them that they had indeed made it in American society. In the prewar era, domestic servants marked success and affluence, separating the working class from the upper middle class. As the middle class grew in the postwar era and labor-saving devices lessened household drudgery, domestic help became less common, both because it was less necessary and because the true middle-class family could not afford it. Additionally, the episode upheld the notion that the woman of the house was better suited to instill values in the young. Who would want their child raised by a scamming servant? This had happened under Lucy's own roof. One could only imagine what would happen in a day care center.\(^6^3\) However, the episode still recognized, in a way that later sitcoms of the 1950s did not, that domestic bliss was not all that fulfilling -- even though women's work was portrayed as a tiring yet ultimately worthwhile sacrifice.\(^6^4\)

\(^6^3\) In the 1980s, during the backlash against feminism, society witnessed an epidemic of largely unsubstantiated, highly sensationalized stories about sexual abuse of children in day care centers.

\(^6^4\) "Lucy Gets A Maid," *I Love Lucy*, 27 April 1953, CBS, Desilu Productions. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
A later episode, "Italian Movie," which aired in 1956, continued the plot device of Lucy wanting to break out of domesticity and into show business. On a trip to Italy, Lucy is discovered by an Italian movie director who wants her to consider a role in his upcoming movie. By this time, Ricky has mellowed his position on working outside the home and chooses to support Lucy. She does not know this, however, and she sneaks out to "soak up local color" at a winery, since the film is entitled *Bitter Grapes*. She comes back, stained with red wine, to find her husband and the director waiting for her. She unwittingly killed her chances, as the movie is not about wine at all and the director cannot use a stained actress. He then offers Ethel the part, much to Lucy's dismay.\(^6\)

Some changes had occurred since 1951. Ricky is more supportive of Lucy's aspirations and does not seem as threatened by her working in show business. In the context of the show, Ricky's overall success makes it more acceptable for Lucy to take a small part in a movie. In the broader sense, it reflects a growing awareness about and acceptance of women in the workplace. Over the decade, the number of working married women increased as more women entered the labor force, particularly after their children came of school-age. Additionally, the concerns about dispossessing postwar veterans had faded into obscurity, women were returning to the workplace in spite of cultural mandates, and the women's movement lurked just around the corner, in contrast to the earlier years of the decade when worries about a possible postwar depression and the needs of returning veterans pressed on peoples' minds. Furthermore, in this episode, Lucy flaunts her sexuality as she, albeit lightheartedly, tries to emulate sexy Italian movie stars. She is more confident and more assertive about her sex appeal, perhaps reflecting the impact of the

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\(^6\) "Italian Movie," *I Love Lucy*, 16 April 1956, CBS, Desilu Productions. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
Kinsey study on female sexuality released in 1953 and the increasing sensuousness of women in the culture of the late 1950s.

Lucy gained popularity with viewers through the 1950s because she struck a chord on a variety of levels, tapping into latent desires and fears in a relatively safe environment and playing out middle-class and working-class fantasies. Before Betty Friedan exposed Americans to "the problem that has no name," Lucy broadcast it across America. While an eager June Cleaver later purchased the latest in home labor-saving devices, Lucy tried to wrangle her way out of the home and into show business. Ethel served as a testament to the incessant ennui of an unfulfilling marriage. Moreover, Lucy's character illustrated the growing tension between married women and single women, in that Lucy was frequently seen in episodes where she expressed jealousy of the women Ricky met in his line of work.66 Before Sex and the Single Girl arrived on the scene to alert women that men found single women sexy and alluring, Lucy articulated that latent fear. In a 1951 episode called "Lucy is Jealous of a Show Girl," for example, Lucy disrupts Ricky's act and sabotages a dancer when Lucy feels threatened by her.67 Not all single women were spinsters to be pitted -- many were femmes fatales ready to lure men away. Lucy ultimately suffered containment in the domestic sphere in most episodes, and the Ricardos did eventually move to the suburbs, but not without a fight. Moreover, the show spoke quite loudly to the power of consumption: in an era that was shadowed by the dark cloud of McCarthyism, Lucille Ball was little affected by her communist history -- she was simply too profitable and too much of an icon. By 1957, I Love Lucy ended its run as the most successful sitcom in television history

66 Gerard Jones, 71-72.
67 "Lucy Is Jealous of a Show Girl," I Love Lucy, 17 December 1951, CBS, Desilu Productions. All dialogue taken directly from the episode.
and stopped production as a series, although it remained at the height of its popularity. The characters remained in America's living rooms for years to come, however, as Desilu produced a series of hour-long specials about the Ricardos and the Mertzes which aired periodically in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Reruns of the show aired on prime time until 1961. 68

By the early 1960s, perhaps motivated by Lucy Ricardo's perseverance, America's women seemed ready to challenge more openly the ideology of domestic containment. They appeared primed to exercise their new, socially acceptable libidos. These forces were, in many instances, at odds with one another, fueling the confusion about women's identity in the 1960s. Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women formed to address concerns about American women, and two non-fiction books compelled women -- married and single -- to examine their situations. Both squarely attacked the status quo but in very different ways. Helen Gurley Brown celebrated women's personal liberation in her 1962 book *Sex and The Single Girl* and suggested that women ignore the advice to marry young and instead enjoy a stint as a liberated single woman. The next year, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* galvanized the latent spirit of dissent brewing among many of America's women, prompting a rebirth of feminism by 1966. Middle-class women struggled to adjust to the changing norms and values in society. Women's magazines in the prefeminist era provided a forum to negotiate new ideals of femininity, drawing on the ideas expressed in these and other self-help publications. Often, these concerns were articulated beyond the female sphere in general interest magazines as men and women alike grappled with changing gender roles. Concerns were expressed about the changing roles of women, and ideas were exchanged and debated in

68 Brooks, 423.
the editorial pages of the publications. Additionally, most women's magazines indicated that women of the prefeminist era wanted to support America in its struggle for global supremacy, but they were conflicted -- and grew more conflicted toward the 1960s -- about what constituted the highest and best use of women in America.

At the same time, married women absorbed the new literature on sexuality which positioned a fulfilling sex life as an essential component of marriage. New information about female sexuality asserted that women who were not sexually responsive during intercourse with their husbands were somehow abnormal. As massive retaliation gave way to flexible response in American foreign policy, women needed to be "flexibly responsive" to the changing array of advice they were getting on what constituted a normal female sexual response and a healthy marital sex life. The ability to achieve orgasm and experience sexual satisfaction became an essential component of femininity, and marital sex lives were subjected to intense scrutiny. As the ideology of bachelorhood took off and single women became more socially acceptable, married women began to see single women and the single lifestyle as a threat to their stability. As a consequence, women grew more interested in their sex appeal and their desirability, and the cultural landscape featured a more appealing and sensual brand of femininity.

The new sexualized image of American womanhood had a marked impact on visual images of women in the 1960s. Where the visual culture of the 1950s offered many different female prototypes, however stifled under the mantle of domestic containment, by the mid-1960s the culture for the most part presented two competing female identities united by their youthful, sexy appearance: the New Frontier wife as exemplified by Jacqueline Kennedy or the
fictional character of Laura Petrie in the *Dick Van Dyke Show*, and the more independent but equally desirable single girl who appeared in a variety of formats. Both were obviously steeped in the post-Kinsey notion that women were sexual beings. Married women in the late 1950s and 1960s struggled to incorporate a new morality into the sphere of marriage, as increasingly, married women knew they faced competition from sexy single girls or sometimes other married women, not only in the popular media but in everyday life.

Changing attitudes toward women's sexuality became the subject of much concern in the early 1960s. Attention to female sexuality blossomed a decade earlier with Alfred C. Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, first published in 1953. Kinsey wrote this second book as a follow-up to his previous work on male sexuality, which he wrote in hope of fomenting a sexual revolution in American society, a revolution he helped both to initiate and to ignite. The female volume was prompted by letters from women who took issue with Kinsey's contention that women's capacity for sexual pleasure was far less than that of men. After receiving letters from numerous women attesting to the existence and endurance of the female orgasm, and in some cases the superiority of the female libido, Kinsey committed himself to studying female sexual behavior. His own data proved him wrong and forced him to change his position on female sexuality.69

For all its raucous implications, the study read as a rather dense 800 plus pages of statistical data complied over fifteen years and involving over 5,000 subjects. Kinsey found that women masturbated70 had orgasms of comparable

intensity to men, and engaged in premarital sex quite regularly, but not quite as regularly as men. Interestingly, Kinsey concluded that women of higher educational backgrounds reached orgasm more often. This finding stood in complete contrast to earlier assumptions that lower-class women were more sexually responsive, an interpretation that had given female sexuality a negative connotation in terms of class and status. In other words, prior to Kinsey's study, it was not considered proper or ladylike to enjoy sex, or at least to admit to it in public. By the early 1960s, society had changed so much that women were afraid to admit they did not enjoy sex. In 1953, the results of Kinsey's study received quite a bit of media attention, engineered by Kinsey himself, but the media tended to downplay the more revolutionary aspects of the study about masturbation and extramarital affairs, likely reflecting the repressive climate of opinion in America at the time. Women, however, sent numerous letters to Kinsey praising him for his bold revelations, and the book went on to become the third best-selling non-fiction book of 1953.

By the early 1960s, Americans had embraced Kinsey’s revelations about female sexuality. His work gained more popularity due to the publication of Sex and the Single Girl and The Feminine Mystique, both of which referred to the Kinsey study. By the early to mid-1960s, embracing the female libido became chic and desirable. Betty Friedan referred to the Kinsey study numerous times in order to strengthen her argument against the feminine mystique, hammering home the message that highly educated women and professional women who were intellectually fulfilled were more likely to have orgasms and find sex fulfilling. This resulted in a general call to women to be more exciting and

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71 Kinsey 678-679
72 Kinsey 330-332
73 Kinsey, 378-379
74 James Jones, 700-710. Also see "Best-sellers of the 1950s," at caderbooks.com.
adventurous in the marriage bed, but seemed to have a rather chilling effect on marriages by the early 1960s, as Betty Friedan noted in her study. Women's magazines became a forum for discussion and dissemination of this information by the early 1960s. Friedan lauded Henrik Ibsen's 1879 play *A Doll's House* for exposing the repression of Victorian society through protagonist Nora. In the play, Nora likened her existence to that of a doll. Friedan questioned why American women, having come so far in the fight for access to the public sphere since the late nineteenth century, would willingly return to domesticity.76

Lillian Smith reviewed Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in an article in the February 23, 1963 issue of *Saturday Review*:

> Nora is back in the doll's house. It is now a split level abode with her own car in the garage, but a doll's house nevertheless. For a short while in the early decades of this century she was given a brief glimpse of a world where she might function as a full human being, where her intelligence and talent might be valued. Now, somehow, here she is, pushed back to her old biological level as she was in the Ibsen drama. The only change (which might be interpreted as a bribe) is that now Nora, the little dear, can enjoy sex: that part of her nature has been officially defrosted. But alas, poor Nora! As she defrosts, her man's amatory functions seem to be slipping into a hard chill.77

Smith went on to support Friedan's claim that middle-class women routinely complained about their husband's "erotic indifference."78 Similar sentiments found expression in a number of articles, most of them suggesting that the pressure on men to please women sexually had resulted in tension and anxiety in men. In "How Men Feel About Sex," appearing in the June 1963 issue of *Reader's Digest*,79 marriage counselor David Mace explained that men felt extremely self-conscious about their performance in bed, although they seldom expressed it.

78 Smith, 43.
The new mandate to satisfy their wives intimidated them and could have dire consequences. He explained that men and women functioned differently regarding their sexual timing, with men becoming aroused more easily. It was the husband who had to adjust to the disparate timetable, and Mace cautioned women to be sensitive to this. He revealed that "many men feel deeply inept every time their wives fail to reach a climax," and cautioned women to be "sensitive to this fact." His article told couples that it was not the husbands' fault if their wives failed to reach orgasm according to the same timetable. Since this advice appeared in a magazine with a male and female audience, it is evident that men and women alike felt concerned about the new mandate for female sexual fulfillment.

The impact of this phenomenon on women's egos was discussed in a 1963 Redbook article entitled "Husbands and Love," with the subheading: "'He works too hard' or 'I'm losing my looks' are the only explanations most women can accept for a problem that has much more delicate and complicated causes." Women, it explained, had an ingrained notion that men were creatures of lust and passion, always just a look or a wink away from full sexual arousal. Consequently, it felt particularly humiliating to a woman when a man seemed to lose interest in sex. Many women, it claimed, rationalized that men came home too tired from work, an explanation that the article dismissed. Women often blamed themselves for being too fat, too unattractive, or too uninteresting. Although this fear was not lost on advertising executives of the era, it too fell short of being a satisfactory explanation in the mind of the article's author. The article turned to Kinsey and the current group of psychologists drawing on his work. Kinsey had noted back in the 1950s that men and women had different

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80 Mace, 71
chronologies regarding their libidos. Women, he found, reached their sexual prime in their late thirties and forties, maintaining an active interest in sex into old age. Men, conversely, peaked at an early age and experienced a natural decline in desire by middle-age. Women, the Kinseyites surmised, interpreted this normal decline in sexual interest as a statement about their own attractiveness. This, however, failed to account for the large percentage of younger couples also complained of the same dilemma. Instead, Redbook readers were offered another rather interesting theory: the link between male ego and sexuality. If men suffered humiliation and low self-esteem, they were more likely to lose interest in sex. In the unsatisfying working world of postwar corporations where loss of control and loss of esteem were rampant, men felt powerless and impotent and this was spilling over into the bedroom.\(^82\)

In "What Wives Don't Know About Sex,"\(^83\) appearing in Reader's Digest, a medical doctor answered questions about marital sex lives. Author Dr. Abraham Stone discussed the increased concern about female frigidity. He attributed this mostly to the inability of men to satisfy their wives, noting that if a woman had been left "in mid-air" (without orgasm), she might withdraw sexually altogether. He also noted the increasing number of men who were withdrawing sexually from their wives and cautioned that the ensuing frustration due to lack of interest was equally as serious for the wife as for the husband. He encouraged women to be more assertive in initiating sex, advocated an "old-fashioned double bed,"\(^84\) and suggested several sex and marriage manuals to keep the home fires burning. Finally, he indicated that a good physical relationship was not the only factor in a good marriage, stating that "a good wife must seek to

\(^82\) "Husbands," 124.
\(^83\) Abraham Stone, M.D., "What Wives Don't Know About Sex" Readers' Digest (condensed from Ladies' Home Journal), March 1964, 80-81.
\(^84\) Stone, 80.
educate herself in all aspects of marriage -- how be a good companion, homemaker, a good mother."\textsuperscript{85}

Taken together, these articles suggested a general consensus in postwar American society that a lack of interest in marital sex was cause for alarm and, conversely, that a fulfilling sex life had become a necessary component of marriage. The fact that \textit{Reader's Digest} reprinted articles from women's magazines indicated that these topics were of interest and concern to both genders. The problem was ironic: as women broke out of their coquettish veneer of innocence, their men shrank from the task at hand. If male ego and feelings of self-worth were indeed linked to sexual desire, this era likely proved to be a difficult one for men. With the rise of large corporations in postwar America, many men felt dissatisfied with the loss of control and autonomy such institutions fostered. Competition for promotions and the generally sycophantic atmosphere of early postwar American business culture may have contributed to feelings of low self-esteem among men and a rising pressure to perform and conform. Concurrently, men felt compelled to measure up in the bedroom as they tried to satisfy the rising libidos and expectations of their partners, drawing upon the myriad bits of information they received about marriage and sex. Additionally, because women increasingly depended upon their domestic life for personal fulfillment, they placed more importance on the sexual relationship than ever before.

That this sometimes resulted in a lack of or decrease in desire for sex is not surprising. Add to this the complication of a new baby, which was more than likely during the baby boom years, and the stresses on both the husband and wife grew more pronounced while the opportunities for love making decreased.

\textsuperscript{85} Stone, 80
Women, it seemed, interpreted this lack of attention as a deficiency in themselves and their attractiveness. Advertisers exploited this, crafting a culture of beauty where marketers played on women's insecurities and fostered an increasingly sexualized ideal of femininity in the coming years.

Concurrent with fostering of a sexual revolution, American society sowed the seeds feminism in the early 1960s. Women began to look to the public sphere to obtain the fulfillment they missed at home, yet they weighed their decisions in light of the burdens their ambitions would place on the family. The issue of the highest and best use of American women was addressed outside the women's magazine sphere, as America still reeled from post-Sputnik fears of a missile gap. Women and girls were considered the great untapped resource of the country. In "Are We Wasting Women?" Dr. Mary Bunting, president of Radcliffe, noted that the greatest waste in America was an educated woman who gave up her aspirations to raise children. Stating that she had raised four children while teaching and researching, Bunting contended that an educated, intellectually challenged mother proved better for her family than one who felt bored and unhappy. The article compared women's status in America to the Soviet Union where women held forty-five percent of industrial jobs and fifty-eight percent of the positions on collective farms and three out of four doctors were women. In contrast, women comprised only one-third of the United States workforce. Women dropped out of college to marry, although the jobs that needed filling to further economic advancement in America were those in the highly skilled professions. The article reflected the view of a substantial number of Americans who, although in the minority, felt that women could balance the needs of career and family and do so in the best interest of their country.

86 Dr. Mary Bunting, "Are We Wasting Women?," Life, July 28, 1961, 36.
An article entitled "In the Same Boat" in *Ebony* also supported a more public role for America's women. Comparing the status of women in the 1960s to African Americans in the 1950s, it took issue with the fact that the space program did not accept women. It likened segregation in the space program to racial segregation in past decades. With a forceful and bold tone, the article advocated women in the public sphere, stating that women would make more cost-effective astronauts and had more endurance than men. The article also supported the inclusion of African Americans in the space program. It went on to offer support for equal pay for women and equal access to employment opportunities, noting that because of bias by white men against women and African Americans, a "vast reservoir of talent is lost to the nation." It concluded that "the PTA is not enough to challenge the modern woman, nor will token integration satisfy the young Negro." 

To African American women who had traditionally worked in larger numbers than white women, and to working class women doing menial labor, the complaints of the bored suburban housewife likely rang hollow. It is not surprising that *Ebony* readers and writers would be likely to champion the more traditional goals of feminism, as these goals would be of value to someone working out of necessity rather than for personal fulfillment. Such articles seemed to agree that women constituted a vast untapped national resource, one being put to better use by the Soviets.

The suggestion that American women should emulate their Soviet counterparts was tough to swallow for young women concerned about their sexuality. Stephen J. Whitfield, in a chapter on cold war films in his study of cold war culture, concluded that in Hollywood's depictions, "women in the party are either disturbingly unfeminine, downright unattractive, or nearly

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87 "In the Same Boat, *Ebony*, October 1962, 72.
nymphomaniacs . . . using sex for political seduction." The launch of the James Bond films in the early 1960s generally furthered this stereotype. In the 1963 film From Russia With Love, for example, the manly, detached, emotionless "Number Three" is depicted as the antithesis of American femininity. She has no values or allegiance, leaving her post as head of operations for Soviet intelligence to join Specter, a renegade group of opportunists bent on world domination. She is the unsightly example of what happens when equality is realized between the sexes, and she is a testament to the danger of allowing women in leadership roles. The Euro-American "Bond girls" are, by comparison, sexy, pliant pets, dependent on their man for affirmation -- "dangerously sensual" in that they are loyal to the nation but a rather distracting temptation for James Bond. The only Soviet woman to be depicted as feminine is Tanya -- an unwitting pawn in the evil scheme who is tricked by the evil Number Three into thinking she is still fighting for the Soviets. Sent because of her good looks and willingness to use sex as a power tool, she is meant to seduce and eliminate James Bond. It is apparent from the onset that she is emotionally vulnerable, as she asks Bond, "Am I as exciting as all those Western girls?" She goes on to fall in love with Bond, and he is able to rescue her, exposing the fact that she has been duped by Specter. The two ride off into the sunset, with the implication that she will join forces with the West in the cold war, finding hot love in the process. The film suggested that Soviet women were frigid, emotionless, incapable of love, and devoid of happiness, unless they could be rescued and won over by Euro-American notions of gender and sexual relations.

88 Whitfield, 133
89 From Russia With Love, dir. Terence Young, prod. Albert Broccoli and Harry Sattzman (Danjaq Productions, 1963). All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the film.
For a culture steeped in anticommunist rhetoric and the feminine mystique, any suggestion that the Soviets had a better plan for women proved disturbing. Yet, many intellectuals pushed for the education of women, linking the Soviet’s lead in technology to the fact that the Soviets encouraged women to reach their full potential. Women consumed contradictory messages, and their fate seemed inexorably intertwined with United States foreign policy and cold war concerns. As the famous Kitchen Debate between Vice-President Richard M. Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev demonstrated in 1959, American material prosperity provided a bulwark against communism and served as a vital sign of the success of capitalism. A woman's primary role in cold war America in the 1950s was as a consumer of these goods and as an instiller of American virtue in her young, regardless of what sphere she occupied. Still, educated women could not help but be enticed by the lure of the public sphere.

Various articles in women's magazines addressed the issue of choosing a career or marriage. A short story in the November 1963 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*, "Going Away" by Sallie Bingham,\(^9\) recounts the tale of a middle-aged Southern woman whose son Jock is leaving for college. Her husband has also "gone away" to take a job in another city -- theirs is apparently a marriage of convenience. Mrs. Long is wealthy, commanding the services of several domestics, one of whom is trying to persuade her to help her struggling son through college. Her husband has also "gone away" to take a job in another city -- theirs is apparently a marriage of convenience. Mrs. Long is wealthy, commanding the services of several domestics, one of whom is trying to persuade her to help her struggling son through college. Mrs. Long reflects on the upbringing of her own child, on whom she has doted and spoiled for seventeen years. Her life, she feels, is empty. She is reduced to waging a juvenile battle with her insolent son about whether or not he can take a tattered suit to college with him. She wins the battle, physically grabbing the suit out of his hands, and takes a moment to

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consider the absurdity of her elation. She ponders the pathetic outcome of her life:

She had never been able to deal with Jock, or with his father; they had devoured her life, draining her of everything that was good in her, and then they had both left her -- her husband to Minneapolis, to live alone, and now Jock to college, with his ugly little assurance. Yet she had always tried to do what seemed right to her in order not to defraud herself or other people; when she was a girl, she never let men put their hands in the front of her dress because it had seemed too destructive, and as a woman she had never let herself be abused -- and she had never abused anyone else. Yet why had her life turned out so shabby and poor?91

The story ends by suggesting that Mrs. Long might find fulfillment through selfless philanthropy. She gives the tattered yet salvageable suit to her domestic seamstress, Lucy. With a casual comment to Lucy -- "is it Lexington [the college of choice for Lucy's son] he wants to go to?" The reader is left with the impression that Mrs. Long plans to help her domestic's son realize his dream.

Advice columns also dealt with the issue of domestic malaise and the alternative of the workplace. In "She Sought Refuge From Domestic Chaos in a Job," featured in *Ladies' Home Journal*'s monthly column "Can This Marriage Be Saved?" in the October 1963 issue,92 Author Dorothy Cameron Disney told the story of a young couple who could not make the necessary sacrifices for happiness due to their emotional immaturity. Judy is a slovenly housekeeper and Ted is moving from job to job, hoping to sidestep the hard road to success by following a series of opportunities that are too good to pass up. Ted constantly criticizes Judy for her poor domestic abilities and she berates him for being a lousy provider. She is baffled that he does not understand why she

91 Bingham, 94.
rejects his sexual advances after being criticized and made to feel inadequate all evening by his demeaning insults. She visits her mother, a bohemian artist, and decides to take a job as an artist in a small advertising agency. However, Ted and Judy have two small children in school. When her husband protests, she leaves him, takes the children, and strikes out on her own. She tells a marriage counselor that she loves her job, that her boss provides the necessary positive reinforcement for her work and only offers constructive criticism when needed. Ted thinks her boss is a middle-aged pervert who has designs on her. Judy, however, seems quite happy on her own, although she has had to scale back her lifestyle due to the reduction in her income. The saga ends with Judy and Ted reconciling and Judy resigning from her job. Ted promises to be more attentive, and the counselor deduces that the job and boss merely substituted for the praise and positive reinforcement Judy missed at home. In a conciliatory gesture, they both agree to take an art class together to foster Judy's self-growth and their marital intimacy.

A similar article in the May 1963 issue of Mc Calls, "Sex Problems After Ten Years of Marriage," tackled the problem of sexual ruts which occur after a prolonged period of marriage. Marriage, it claimed, had become a "super highway" with husband and wife speeding by and not connecting. Over time, lovemaking became rote and mechanical, "like small talk at a cocktail party," rather than true intimacy. According to the article, couples who had this problem were in their early thirties and had several children. In a third of the cases, mothers worked outside the home. The women were saddled with all the domestic and childrearing responsibilities, and the demands on the husband at work grew each year. The article concluded that unrealistic expectations and

"the current mythology that every such [sexual] experience must be an almost overwhelming one" put too much pressure on couples. It suggested getting an old fashioned double bed and encouraged the wife to initiate sex because "nothing flatters a normal potent man so much as his wife's evident desire for his embrace."94

Taken together, these three pieces suggested that Americans had begun to search for ways to reconcile the many disparate threads of the middle-class ideal of marriage in prefeminist postwar America -- a rising tide of individualism, a thriving culture of consumption, increasing expectations for sexual fulfillment, and an intense focus on childrearing and education fostered by the cold war. As Jennifer Scanlon found in her study of the Ladies' Home Journal95 of the 1920s, fiction pieces often expressed views more indicative of underlying sentiment than the non-fiction articles. In "Going Away" the message seemed clear: Mrs. Long sacrificed her life to the raising of her son and the nurturing of her husband only to be left empty and alone. Her servants, in fact, exhibited more of a zest for life than their wealthy benefactor. The bittersweet reflection on her chaste and righteous adolescence appeared riddled with regret, seeming to belie the growing concern articulated in American periodicals that the lax morals of America's youth should cause alarm. She finds empowerment in her decision to help her servant, Lucy. It is of note that Mrs. Long was a middle-aged woman who likely fit the profile of Betty Friedan's target audience.

The second story involved a much younger woman, one who had likely imbibed more deeply the ideology of the feminine mystique but was still young enough to be enticed by new promises of freedom, individuality, and sexual

94 "Sex Problems After Ten Years of Marriage", McCall's, May 1963: 188.
liberation. Ultimately, though, she chose to go back to her family and leave her job. At first glance this may seem a more reactionary story, but under its surface lay radical elements. Mrs. Long's desires were private and hidden. Judy, on the other hand, was ostensibly a real woman who acted on her dissatisfaction, perhaps motivated by her mother, and made a better life for herself and her children. After she proved herself in the public sphere, she had some bargaining power with her husband. Although she did not have an affair with her boss, it was clear that she was on the verge of doing so. She was no longer at her husband's mercy and returned to the marriage on her own terms. The target audience for "Sex Problems After Ten Years of Marriage" also involved relatively young married couples in their early thirties. This article made no moral judgment about working outside the home, but it did note that working mothers also shouldered the bulk of domestic responsibilities. Its biggest warning seemed to be aimed at the rising expectations for sexual excitement and bliss, indicating that couples should not become overly focused on their sex lives at the expense of other aspects of marriage.

Women's magazines also gave attention to women in the political sphere. One of the most comprehensive treatments was "Women in Politics: The Coming Breakthrough," which appeared in a September 1962 issue of McCall's. The article discussed the rising number of women in politics and their many contributions. Ironically, domestic containment seemed to have been a springboard to political activism for women in the early postwar years, in much the same way that the "cult of true womanhood" in the nineteenth century unwittingly produced women abolitionists, the first American women's suffrage movement, and temperance campaigns.

Housewives in the 1950s and early 1960s became active in local politics to improve conditions in their neighborhoods. In particular, they heeded government warnings about the missile gap after the launch of Sputnik in 1957, and helped push for better education for their children. Women often volunteered at the local precincts where their secretarial and office management skills helped streamline and organize voting precincts. *McCalls* noted that "suburban life has tended to sweep women into politics; with their husbands away in the cities, women have tended to take over the political canvassing and telephoning and transporting of voters to the polls on election day, or it doesn't get done."97 A local precinct manager remarked, "Because of women, we now keep records and have filing systems in the precincts."98 Women, the men reported, were better organizers, more diligent, more honest, and more idealistic. This resulted in an increasing number of women being promoted to paid positions and reaching higher into the upper echelons of politics. The article reported that women were at a disadvantage for political posts at the national level because of their hampered mobility. Women had to weigh their political ambitions against the needs of family. It was generally acknowledged that women had much to offer the political world, but they still had the primary responsibility for childrearing. Their aspirations outside the domestic arena were expected to take a back seat to their husbands' careers.

It seems that women's economic dependence on their husbands worked to the advantage of the political system, and to women's political expressiveness. Since many volunteered, they could not be frightened into submission due to the threat of termination. They could stand up for their principles in ways that men could not. Their integrity and selflessness struck a blow at the good-old-boy

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97 "Women in Politics," 103.
98 "Women in Politics," 156.
status quo. United States Representative Catherine May made this clear: "The oldtime leader is scared of women. He's been calling the shots his own way, expecting everyone to 'clear it with Joe' and now he sees all these interested and enlightened women coming in, whom he can't influence at all." The article concluded that the increasing number of women in politics at the local and state level would result in more women at the national level in the near future. Many of the men interviewed, including Democratic National Committee Chairman John Bailey, saw this as a positive trend for the future of the nation, pointing out that women already "determine the fate of most school elections" and "determine the fate of most bond issues for city improvements." McCalls saw this quiet revolution as potentially more significant than the sensational but infrequent past federal appointments (e.g., Frances Perkins' appointment as Labor Secretary under Franklin D. Roosevelt). Those were more visible in that they were important posts at the national level, but they were also more politically motivated -- thus more token -- in nature. The grass roots contributions of women in the prefeminist era actually reshaped the political system in America. The article predicted that women would run for higher office in the future, and it was correct.

Margaret Chase-Smith announced her candidacy for the Republican presidential ticket on January 27, 1964, becoming the first woman to seek a presidential nomination. A senior senator from Maine with more experience than seventy-five percent of her mostly male colleagues, she failed to win the Republican nomination in 1964. An article in U.S. News and World Report had discussed the complex issues at the root of her candidacy, stating that the White

99 Representative Catherine May, as quoted in "Women in Politics," 156.
100 John Bailey, as quoted in "Women in Politics," 156.
House and the Supreme Court remained the only two branches of government that had yet to include women. One of the main objections to her candidacy was that a woman would not be able to go eyeball to eyeball with the likes of Nikita Khrushchev or would be less likely to declare war if necessary. *U.S. News and World Report* argued that after Pearl Harbor, Representative Jeannette Rankin of Montana was the only person to vote against going to war with Japan (although eight other female members of Congress cast a vote in favor of going to war with Japan). The article concluded that Smith's chances were slim, but that her candidacy itself was a significant turning point in history.

In the following issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, reporter David Lawrence grappled with the assumption that women had not been elected to the presidency because of some form of discrimination. He opposed the notion of advancing particular candidates because of race or gender, noting that ability was the only criterion that should be taken into consideration. To that point, he concluded that there was no inherent reason why a woman could not be president, except that there had been fewer qualified women in the past. The one valid reason why a woman should be president was that "many of the women in public office thus far have shown themselves to be honest-minded and outspokenly frank," and that "there's a lot that the masculine segment of American politics could learn from women."102 Ambitious women generally found more acceptance by the culture when they used their womanly charms and exhibited stereotypical female behaviors. Lawrence championed the potential of women to use their femininity to effect change, not to emulate men. Women in the public sphere needed to safeguard their femininity if they were to be acceptable to segments of the voting populace.

When Smith was asked why she thought women had not had more success in politics, she attributed it to the attitudes and actions of both men and women -- "men because they vigorously oppose women holding public office, and women because they haven't stood together and exercised their power of the majority of voting power." It seems Chase Smith was right on the second count: in a Gallup poll, more men (fifty-eight percent) than women (fifty-one percent) answered yes to the question, "if your party nominated a generally well-qualified woman for President, would you vote for her?" This sentiment prefigured the debate over the necessity of an equal rights amendment, an issue about which women themselves felt divided and contentiously so.

The issue of the women's vote proved of great importance in the 1964 election, as there were over four million more women than men voters registered. A *McCalls* article surveyed the conservative General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) in order to get a handle on the attitudes of women before the 1964 election, citing the significance of the women's vote to the election. Ironically, the results suggested that no such entity as a cohesive "women's vote" existed in 1964. This survey showed that fifty-six percent of the women surveyed would vote for a woman, but that percentage dropped significantly in women under the age of thirty-five. Not surprisingly, the younger women proved more likely to oppose women's rights legislation like equal employment opportunity, equal pay for equal work, and federally supported child care. Younger women, those too young to have experienced the empowerment of World War II, often eschewed feminist causes in favor of the more traditional roles as wives and mothers. Overall, women supported

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103 Margaret Chase Smith, as quoted in *U.S. News and World Report*, "A Woman for President," 35.
104 "A Woman for President," 34.
education, tax breaks for college tuition, increased student loan programs, and reduced income taxes. They generally opposed using tax money on foreign aid but approved military spending to contain communism in Europe and Southeast Asia. They tended to dislike policies that favored labor, like closed shops and public-service industry strike rights. The survey concluded by citing the leader of GFWC, who stated that "we were glad to participate in a survey which has so encouraged clear thinking. Because of the Communist challenge, America must be both guardian and protagonist of free civilization."106 Although the article did not disclose the demographics of the GFWC's eleven million members, it seems obvious that they were mainly middle to upper middle-class women who could oppose federally-funded day care and equal pay for equal work. It is also evident that the cold war played heavily on women's minds, despite the fact that middle-class American women were conflicted about how best to serve their country.

Chase Smith served as an interesting personification of the ambivalence about American women in the prefeminist era. A married woman with no children, Chase Smith advanced her candidacy on the grounds that she had dedicated her life to public service and had no conflicting ambitions regarding motherhood. She called attention to this in order to alleviate concerns that women would somehow have less time to devote to the presidency due to family obligations. Perhaps she had a point, but Americans, in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis and in the midst of increasing tensions in Southeast Asia, were not ready to take a chance on a female head of state. Barry Goldwater won the Republican nomination but subsequently lost the presidency to Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson. Although Chase Smith had a ground breaking role in

106 "Women's Vote," 72.
American history, she remained obviously a product of her era. The behavior of women who advanced in the public sphere came under intense scrutiny, and that fact was not lost on Chase Smith. Public women, perhaps more than others, needed to abide by socially acceptable codes of femininity in keeping with the climate of opinion, offering an alternative to the outdated militant suffragists of earlier days. As Chase Smith, the most prominent woman politician in prefeminst America, proclaimed to McCall's in 1962, just two years before her bid for the presidency: "I'm not a feminist. But women should have an equal chance. To win office a woman needs initiative. She must be aggressive without being obnoxious."¹⁰⁷

Chase Smith deemed this sort of disclaimer necessary in a society that pit the goals of feminism against the ideals of femininity. Educated, middle-aged women encouraged younger women to expand their horizons beyond the domestic sphere, but many young wives remained committed to domesticity, albeit with the right to demand a more satiating sex life. Women, armed with a new assertiveness in the bedroom, struggled to embody a new definition of femininity, one that was still in flux in the early 1960s.

These concerns resonated through the pages of women's magazines. In "Femininity: What Is It? Who Has It? Do You?" in the July issue of Ladies' Home Journal, author Betty Hannah Hoffman tried to construct a definition of this new woman: the "young elegant." She started with the following questions:

What is femininity, anyway? Is our feminine ideal changing? And if so, how far are we from our ideal? During the Victorian age it was considered unwomanly to enjoy sex; women enjoyed hysterics instead. In the roaring 'twenties, many women went after sex aggressively like men; the ideal woman of that day

¹⁰⁷ "Women in Politics, 158."
was flat-chested, flat-hipped, rough-talking, unmotherly. What do we think a woman should be like today?108

Hoffman's article revealed a society worried about the increasing assertiveness of women, even in their domestic roles. She reported that with twenty-three million women working and one in six households headed by women, the role of women was growing in importance not only in the work place but as an authority figure at home. Women had more opportunities to reach their potential than ever before due to increased educational opportunities and a booming economy, and the implications of this were manifold. Some felt that this could endanger the delicate balance between the sexes. Hoffman's article cited psychiatrist Erich Fromm, who explained the basic dynamic between men and women: men were under constant pressure to perform, stemming from the physiological differences that made it possible for men to fail in the sex act. Male ego, therefore, was constantly exposed. If a woman undermined him, a man was devastated. Women, he warned, must understand that men needed to achieve in the public sphere, and women needed to succumb. Worse yet, if a woman ridiculed or poked fun at a man, or showed him up in some way, this would have a detrimental effect on the male ego and thus the relationship. There was a stern directive to avoid being overly witty.109

According to psychiatrist Helene Deutch, also quoted in Hoffman's article, the happiest women could be "original and productive without entering into competitive struggles." They "rejoice in the achievement of their male companions, which they have often inspired" and "envy is alien to them." Lastly, she claimed, "their readiness to give and receive love is tremendous."110 Hoffman

109 Hoffman, Femininity, 57.
110 Helen Deutch, as quoted in Hoffman, Femininity, 57.
revealed that men were threatened by the growing freedom of women and by
the notion that women should, for the good of society, be encouraged to reach
their highest potential, whether as domestic helpmate or nuclear physicist.

The article touted the power of femininity in effecting social change, citing
the fact that women had pushed for legislation to care for the elderly and young
children, and had generally supported legislation to take care of the less
fortunate. It concluded that the true woman of the day could combine
traditional notions of femininity while still reaching her full intellectual and
emotional potential. Hoffman offered a new feminine ideal: the "young elegant"
or the "New Frontier wife" who:

adores children, often has six, and considers raising them her
most important job. She not only is a helpmate to her husband,
she inspires his admiration as well. She keeps up on art,
antiques, books and politics -- although she exhibits her
knowledge modestly. She may sculpt, write poetry, take in
visiting international students or audit philosophy courses at
her nearest university -- and do so with real flair. The current
ideal includes the eternal feminine: babies, beauty, domesticity
and do-goodism. But it might demand the right to have a sense
of humor as well.ii

Although the article stops short of naming her, the obvious prototype for
the new generation was First Lady Jackie Kennedy. Educated, cultured,
accomplished in her career yet happy to put it aside, she seemed to embody all
that was desirable in the new American women. Her husband was equally
revolutionary: secure enough in his manhood to let Jackie shine, and proud to
have such an eloquent, cultured lady at his side. In closing, Hoffman discussed
working women and the positive contributions they made in the work place.
Feminine touches made offices more pleasant and congenial, as women
exercised their "civilizing" and "humanizing" instincts. Working mothers could

ii Hoffman, Femininity, 57.
also be good mothers. Although there might be some fallout at home during periods of stress at work, the article generally felt that women who were happy and fulfilled, even if through their careers, had better relationships with their families overall. The article even revealed that as women entered men's professions, men ventured into the nursery more often and took more of an interest in their children. Hoffman suggested that a truly confident man would not feel emasculated by helping with domestic duties, and that a secure man would encourage a woman to reach her full potential.112

In the same issue, *Ladies' Home Journal* featured a story entitled "How Feminine Are You?" designed to dispel myths about femininity and reassure women that if they decided to embrace some of their new found freedoms, they would not be in danger of losing their femininity. Listing the most common misconceptions about what it meant to be feminine, the article went on to deconstruct them. For instance, a career was not at odds with femininity, especially since "today's woman can pursue a full-time career and still act, look and feel feminine" compared to the past generation of working women who "often acted like men, and looked the part." 113 In other words, it was possible to have a career but still possible and necessary to act like a woman. Women who had children were not necessarily more feminine than women who did not have children. Similarly, women with large families were not superior to those who opted to limit themselves to one or two children. Women did not have to have large breasts and full hips to be feminine, nor did an athletic girl have to worry that such traits would make her undesirable. The article echoed the growing concern that, in light of women's license to embrace sexuality, they would fall victim to promiscuity. Women should, it cautioned, be monogamous, should

112 Hoffman, *Femininity*, 57.
not succumb easily to men's advances, and should not flirt aggressively. On the other hand, female frigidity or sexual inhibition should not be internalized as anti-feminine but rather as a sign of some other psychological issue that needed to be addressed. Women and men alike, it seemed, were taking the new mandates about sexual bliss to heart. Women fretted over lack of sexual responsiveness as much as men worried about their failure to elicit or fulfill a response.

The target audience of the femininity debate was middle to upper middle class women, which clarified as the article looked at another of the myths: "It is highly feminine to have trouble giving orders to domestics, to reprimand them for careless work." The article surmised that women who had this problem actually had unresolved issues with their mothers, noting that it was not a desirable trait to be mealy-mouthed. It intimated that the ability to supervise effectively was a desirable quality in a well-balanced woman. During the 1950s and 1960s, a booming economy and the GI Bill propelled more families into the middle class. Even so, it would prove difficult for many members of American society to live up to the ideal of the "young elegant" notion of femininity. An education, for this new woman, was an adornment, like a pillbox hat or designer shoes. These women could choose not to work and still maintain a lavish lifestyle that included a host of domestics to be supervised. Their careers, if pursued at all, were not necessary to put food on the table and could be cast aside at will. For many American women, and likely a disproportionate number of non-white women, this ideal was unattainable. Regardless, it was an ideal forwarded in the popular culture and bolstered by the political status quo.

114 "How Feminine Are You?", 58.
In television, *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (1961-1966) served as a microcosmic portrait of this middle-class American society. The show revolved around Rob and Laura Petrie. Rob, played by actor Dick Van Dyke, was a writer for *The Allen Brady Show*, a television variety show, and Laura was a stay-at-home mom. Rob worked with two other writers, Buddy Sorrell and Sally Rogers, the former a hen-pecked married man and the latter a matronly single woman. Rob worked in New York City but lived in the suburbs of New Rochelle. The show departed from other sitcoms in that scenes just as frequently occurred in the office as the home. Laura, played by Mary Tyler Moore, embodied the new femininity expected of the young elegant wife. As a classically trained dancer, she was sexy, young, attractive, educated, and cultured. Rob and Laura paralleled in small ways President Kennedy and the First Lady. The Kennedyesque nature of the Petries helped Americans absorb aspects of Camelot into their middle class worlds. Early episodes reflected the general atmosphere of optimism that pervaded the nation in the years before Kennedy's assassination, with many Americans looking to the youthful, stately couple as role models. Like Jackie, Laura gave up her career to be wife and helpmate to her husband. Later episodes incorporated the changes as Americans coped with the death of Kennedy and its attendant malaise. Through the lens of the Petrie family, American audiences experienced and digested the anxieties and fears shared by ordinary married couples as they grappled with a rapidly changing and rather ambivalent set of values regarding sex, marriage, career, and family. Laura also exuded the tensions women felt regarding the importance of the domestic sphere to happiness, expectations for sexual fulfillment, and the need to be desirable to men.

Gerard Jones, 143-145
In a 1961 episode entitled "Blonde-Haired Brunette," Laura exhibits the insecurities women felt about their sex appeal as new information about marital sex lives emerged. The episode opens with Laura trying to rouse husband Rob on a Saturday morning. She tries to wake him up with kisses and caresses in a thinly veiled attempt to seduce him. Abruptly, he brushes away her advances and mumbles "don't to that!" He then requests that she let him sleep. Laura is crushed. She walks away, dejected and rejected, and the audience hears the voice in her head: "He always loved that! Is he getting tired of me?" She wants them to have breakfast together and says she'll wait until 10 o'clock -- per Rob's request -- then proceeds to set the clock ahead and gives him five more minutes. She tricks him into getting up and then confesses that it is only 8:10 a.m. He agrees to shower and come downstairs. When he arrives at breakfast, he gives her a pat on the back and asks, "how's my old lady?" He complains that his orange juice is too pulpy, and -- the last straw -- plucks a lone gray hair from Laura's head. In what is a familiar sitcom dynamic, she cries but refuses to tell him what is wrong. Of course, Rob looks like a boor to the audience whose sympathies are with her. The next day, after Rob goes to the office, her neighbor Milly convinces Laura to die her hair blonde and surprise Rob with a "new woman" when he comes home. By sheer coincidence, Rob calls to apologize and sings a song about Laura with the dark brown hair. She panics when he says he loves her the way she is, and she and Milly scramble to die her hair back. He arrives to find her half-blonde, half-brunette; she cries and he placates her by calming her insecurities.

Changes in the ideology of marriage had taken place by the early 1960s, and Laura is overly concerned about her role as her husband's helpmate and

116 "Blonde-Haired Brunette," The Dick Van Dyke Show, 10 October 1961, CBS. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
about her success in the domestic sphere. She exemplifies the young, sexy, American wife struggling to conform to mainstream American values that seem constantly in flux. Additionally, she is aware of the overwhelming importance of sex appeal and is worried about her husband’s lack of interest in her, indicating the impact of the new morality regarding female sexuality which translated into an increasing obsession with looks. Like the women featured in magazine articles, Laura interpreted Rob's lack of interest in sex as a sign that she was not attractive enough to her husband.

Although at first glance the show might seem a bit conservative, subversiveness lurked under its surface. From its inception, the series dealt with a choice central to women: career or marriage and a family. Through the character of Sally Rogers, audiences witnessed an often bleak alternative to Laura's lifestyle. Sally's character at times came off as bitter, but she developed and changed over time. She occasionally longed for the lifestyle Laura had, appearing desperate for marriage, recounting her bad dates, and feeling stuck with a career that she could not snuggle with at night. Indeed, the series seemed to uphold the feminine mystique, and no doubt many women viewers would have chosen Laura's lifestyle. When compared to female prototypes featured on later shows, such as The Mary Tyler Moore Show (1970-1977), the series stacked up in favor of Laura's choice of domesticity. As the series progressed, however, it dealt more directly with the complexity of choosing career over marriage and the conflicts women felt. This was expressed quite directly in two back to back episodes aired in 1964, "The Pen Is Mightier Than The Sword,"\(^{117}\) and "My Part-Time Wife."\(^{118}\)

\(^{117}\) "The Pen is Mightier Than The Sword," The Dick Van Dyke Show, 19 February 1964, CBS. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the show.

\(^{118}\) "My Part-Time Wife," The Dick Van Dyke Show, 26 February 1964, CBS. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the show.
In the first episode, Sally is asked to appear on a popular nighttime talk show. Rob comes in late from work to find Laura perfectly coifed, waiting in bed in a sexy nightgown, but nodding off to sleep. He tells her to stay up for a surprise and proceeds to put on the talkshow. Laura and Rob watch as Sally steals the show, mostly by making jokes about her pathetic boyfriend and her love life. Sally looks great, as Laura notes. In fact, the dowdy, pitiable Sally of the office is gone. She is stylish, sexy, and makes overt sexual overtures to the host, at one point actually grabbing him and kissing him. Sally is such a hit that she is asked to be on again the next day, and then the next day, which leads to more days missed at work. Rob and Buddy are supportive at first, but they grow envious and start resenting her success. They cannot get by without Sally. Neither can type, and the productive three-person dynamic that worked with Sally in the mix descends into a grumpy-old-man session with both of them longing for Sally's return. The message is clear: women are needed in the workplace, not just for their typing skills but also for their diplomacy and their feminine charms. Alan Brady, the star of the series for which they write, is more supportive than Rob and Buddy and even asks Sally out to lunch. Eventually, Sally comes back and all returns to normal, until a magazine camera crew comes in to do a story on Sally. At the end of the episode, Sally decides to take a leave of absence and appear as a regular on the nighttime talk show. The men admit that they were being selfish and end up feeling very happy for Sally.

In the next episode, "My Part-Time Wife," Laura ends up working in the office to fill in for Sally. At first, Rob is very reluctant to let her help out. But, after he goes through several other incompetent women, Laura finally puts her foot down and insists that Rob let her help him. She assures him that her office duties will not conflict with her domestic responsibilities, but Rob is skeptical. All
goes well initially as Laura proceeds to whip the office into shape. She types, files, and gets out of his hair during lunch. Rob begins to feel perplexed at Laura's ability to handle career and family -- breakfast and dinner are on time and flawless, and the house is immaculate. When Laura starts to interject her thoughts into the writing process -- actually coming up with clever and funny jokes -- Rob becomes insufferable. He cannot accept his wife's advice and it is obviously undermining his masculinity. He starts to act distant and becomes difficult and argumentative. He finally blurts out that her perfection is annoying the hell out of him. The show returns to the domestic sphere where they continue their argument. She breaks down and weeps, saying that she was just trying to help him and be a good wife. She confesses that she is exhausted from taking care of home and family. "It wasn't fun!" she cries, "it was the hardest week of my life." He is shocked, as she had made it appear effortless. He apologizes, secure in his role as breadwinner. All is well in the marriage.

These two episodes sent some seriously contrary messages. On the one hand, Sally's lifestyle was no longer pitiable but downright enviable. She was propelled to stardom while Laura was home baking cakes and typing out recipes, hungry for the opportunity to enter the public sphere. Laura, like Lucy Ricardo before her, was ultimately contained in the domestic sphere, but now viewers had Sally as a point of comparison. Additionally, while Lucy generally botched her attempts to enter the public sphere, Laura was a resounding success, suggesting that if she could just absolve herself of her familial responsibilities, she could find success in the business world. On the other hand, Laura was emotionally more dependent on male approval than Lucy was, and she was much more overtly sexual than women of the 1950s sitcoms. Laura's entire identity revolved around Rob's approval of her, which was often contingent on
her sexy, youthful appearance in the private sphere. She was competing for her husband's attention in a world of changing morality regarding sex and marriage.

The comparison of Lucy and Laura demonstrates the swiftly changing dynamics of marriage and sexuality in postwar culture. Lucille Ball and Mary Tyler Moore were both products of their eras, and their personal histories affected their art. Ball emerged from the Rosie generation, and her character reflected all the pent-up tensions women felt when placed into the domestic sphere after tasting empowerment. Moore came from a slightly younger generation, too old for the baby boom but too young to remember the war -- the very age group targeted by marketers for a "sexual sell." She would, however, later break out of this paradigm and go on to produce the most popular sitcom about a single woman in television history, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970-1977), a show which struck a compromise between the radical, baby-boomer version of women's liberation and the more traditional goals of feminism. There would always be some of Laura Petrie in Mary Richards, regardless of her marital status, in large part because of the effectiveness of the sexual sell and the importance of retaining femininity.

Addams' cartoons from The New Yorker, lambasted mainstream American society's conventions. Its sensibilities were a bit ahead of its time, as evidenced in its short stint as a prime time series compared to its ongoing appeal as a cult phenomenon. The series centered on the antics of the strange and unconventional Addams family. Gomez, husband and father, defied the mandates of corporate America, preferring instead to stay home and blow up toy trains. He was frequently distracted by Morticia, his sexy, seductive wife, who dressed in a long, black, tight-fitting gown. Although the secondary characters were ghoulish, as was their home decor, Gomez and Morticia exuded sexuality. Their chemistry, in fact, became a defining feature of the show. Gomez frequently grabbed Morticia and planted kisses up and down her long, sinewy arms. "Not in front of the children, Gomez," she would often reply, intimating that her desire was tempered only by her reluctant propriety about the children, Pugsly and Wednesday, who were always home. In contrast to the modest, prudent treatment of sexual attraction in previous sitcoms, The Addams Family offered renegade and prurient themes.

In its debut episode, "The Addams Family Goes to School,"119 truant officer Sam Hilliard comes to their home because the children have never attended school. The perplexed and fearful Hilliard enters the strange abode. At first he meets Morticia, but she informs him that such matters are beyond her control and directs Lurch, their lumbering, zombie-like butler, to take Hilliard to Mr. Addams. Gomez, at first reluctant, explains that his mother tutors the children. Morticia, however, persuades Gomez to reconsider and let the children attend school. She gives him a seductive touch and asserts herself stating, "Gomez, darling, mother knows best." He relents and allows the children to attend school.

119 "The Addams Family Goes to School," The Addams Family, ABC, 18 September 1964. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
Wednesday and Pugsly come back from school traumatized by gruesome stories of witches, giants, and dragons murdered by thoughtless humans; they have read Grimms fairytales. Gomez removes them from school, and Hilliard must return again to the house of horrors. When the Addamses explain their position, Hilliard has an epiphany. The Addamses, he feels, are correct. Violence in the classroom relates to violence in the real world, the escalation of the nuclear arms race, and the destruction of all of humanity. Gomez and Morticia are puzzled yet pleased, as Hilliard agrees to take the stories out of the school curriculum.

School has an adverse impact on Pugsly, however, who in the next episode starts to emulate the very society from which his parents tried to protect him. In "Morticia and the Psychiatrist," Morticia employs a professional to explore the meaning behind Pugsly's sudden desire to join the Boy Scouts and play baseball. Eventually, the puzzled doctor returns Pugsly to his "normal" state, much to the delight of his parents. A later episode reflected the resurgence of feminism in American society. Although Morticia is herself contained in the domestic sphere, in "Ophelia's Career," Morticia advises her lovelorn sister to give up on romance and focus on a career. Ophelia eventually finds success as a singer, exuding a countercultural spirit of empowerment among women in the mid-1960s. In episode after episode, the macabre family, with its antiestablishment sensibilities and black humor, signified that something was amiss in the American family and in American society. In essence, if the Addams family was right, which they often appeared to be, then America must have been wrong. The series foreshadowed the rift that would develop in American society as the debate about Vietnam grew more contentious, and it also signaled the

120 "Morticia and the Psychiatrist," The Addams Family, ABC, 25 September, 1964. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
deepening of a more blatantly sexual feminine ideal. Refracting a small but growing antinuclear and antiestablishment counterculture, the show garnered enough market share to remain in prime time for two years. It proved unable to sustain itself over the long run, however, even amidst a profusion of other such fantasy sitcoms in the mid-to late 1960s.122

As television grappled with women's growing power, the debate about women in the public sphere reached the halls of academia. In an article appearing in *The Yale Review* entitled "The Best of Both Worlds: Feminism and Femininity," author Edna G. Rostow commented on the generational rift opened between middle-aged and younger women. The former bemoaned the choices of younger women to marry at an early age, to avoid educational and career opportunities, and to have babies. They felt slapped in the face by a generation for whom they paved the way, and a "literature of reproach" complained both that "educated women are not given opportunities for achievement and recognition equal to that of men" and that "the opportunities which are open to women are not fully appreciated or fully used."123 The second allegation specifically targeted young women who failed to appreciate what the trailblazers had done for them. In short, said the older feminists, America wasted its women and women wasted their opportunities. Rostow alleged that although the popular media glossed over this fact, the literature of reproach mainly issued from educated "middle-class women." Their real concern was for "the college-trained woman of the middle-classes, and others who might under certain circumstances be college 'material,'"124 not women in general.

122 Gerard Jones, 175-177.
124 Rostow, 385.
Rostow termed cries of the feminists the "Cassandra syndrome" and claimed that, although society owed a great deal to the pioneers of the women's movement, older women needed to realize that times had changed. Younger women now "took their liberation for granted" because "the cause has been won":

The militant women won for us the right to vote and to own and dispose of property; to be educated and to live alone; to hold all kinds of jobs and to practice the professions; to accept or reject a condition that had hitherto been subject to the disposition of men. The second-class status of the "second" sex in this country, at least, is a matter of history.

Rostow's overarching message was that older women failed to realize that younger women could use their education and good upbringing to nurture and develop their children and to be more interesting to their husbands. Much like the republican wives of the Revolutionary era becoming educated to instill civic virtue in their families, or like the Victorian wives being the repositories of morality in the 1800s, cold war wives wanted to embrace the model of the young elegant, serve their country, and distance themselves from what they considered unflattering notions of feminism and liberation associated with the previous generation of feminists. Rostow's arguments came in concert with a new focus on childrearing, the baby boom, and the development of children as a market in American society in the early postwar period. She posited that the increasing freedom given to adolescents, the demands of peer pressure, and the media were forcing adolescents to grow up more quickly, even if they were not necessarily maturing at a similar pace. Wise, educated mothers who focused on the domestic sphere, she intimated, might be able to help guide their young through this precarious period into mature adulthood with less trauma.

125 Rostow, 386.
126 Rostow, 387.
One compromise was offered: provide opportunities for women to go back to school after they had nurtured their children in their early years and during the time when many women began to feel unfulfilled. She concluded that most middle-class American women did not believe that careers were more important than family, and that women's central issues remained for the most part marriage and family. Women, however, were attracted to the rising tide of individualism and the growing notion that personal fulfillment remained an inherent birth right. This, she surmised, was fine but did not mean that women had to find fulfillment in a career. Moreover, society should recognize the contributions of educated nonprofessional women who gave back to their communities, as well as those breaking into traditionally male jobs, and women should relish the fact that they have the best of both worlds.\textsuperscript{127}

Similar sentiments found expression a year later in the popular press, as women struggled to reconcile the need for self-fulfillment with the demands of family, particularly as new concerns about teenage promiscuity were surfacing. In "I'm Going To Get A Job," Betty Hannah Hoffman warned middle-aged women who felt compelled to rush into the job market as an antidote to the "bored housewife syndrome."\textsuperscript{128} She reported that many women who did so were often frustrated by the lack of interesting work available to relatively untrained women who had not been in the work force for some twenty years. Based on a series of interviews and discussions with college administrators and business executives, she reported that women often found menial clerical work less fulfilling than tending to the needs of family. Work in itself was not a

\textsuperscript{127} Rostow, 397-398.

panacea, and she encouraged women to look at volunteer opportunities as an alternative to paid employment if money did not play an important factor.

Additionally, Hoffman discussed the possibility of going back to school and training for a more rewarding career. This, she offered, would require more effort initially but could result in a much more rewarding second career in the long run. She provided information on a number of colleges that had started to cater to a middle-aged, second career female clientele, and she encouraged women to be active in advancing adult education programs. The article was primarily targeted to women who were looking for work for personal satisfaction, rather than out of financial necessity, although she did mention that loans and funding for education were available.129

As women made their way into corporate boardrooms and political offices, as young mothers chose between careers and families, and as society tried to define a new code of sexual behavior for men and women, the print media both reflected and capitalized on the changes in American society, providing a cornucopia of conflicting messages. Print advertising, as it had done in the past, continued to prey on women's insecurities. It had a new and vital audience in the women of America. Advertisements in women's magazines provided one area where the messages came across clearly and directly: women needed to look sexy and youthful or they would lose their man, or worse yet, never get one.

In the early to mid-1960s, advertisements in women's magazines did not follow their editorial counterparts. Absent were images of women pursuing business ventures or looking for educational opportunities. An examination of Ladies' Home Journal advertisements in all issues from 1963, for example, revealed

129 Hoffman, "I'm Going to Get A Job," 107-108.
a plethora of advertisements for food products and cleaning supplies, suggesting that the middle-class American woman's primary role was as a consumer of domestic goods. More disturbing were the array of advertisements designed to alert women to the ever-present threat of two forces that could rip their worlds apart: fat and age.

As Betty Friedan reported, in the early 1960s many women ate a chalk called Metrecal in order to become thinner, longing to squeeze into smaller and smaller dress sizes. By the early 1960s, the average American woman was three to four dress sizes smaller than she had been in 1939. Marketers exploited this obsession with thinness. A Sego liquid diet food advertising campaign used the fear of a husband's disapproval to instill fear in women. One ad featured a shot of a husband looking critically at his wife. The copy asked, "Your honeymoon figure... how slender it was. Would he think so now?" Another ad showed a woman at the beach and asked, "How slender you were on that wonderful vacation. Would he think so now?" Both ads contained pictures of the husband gazing judgmentally at the wife.

Diet aids were offered as a way to combat weight gain. A Metrecal ad focused on a shot of a widening midriff and asked, "Is this the day you finally do something about your weight? All it takes is a little bit of will power ... and Metrecal." A Listerine ad cautioned, "Don't lose your man while you're losing those pounds." The ad went on to explain the unwanted side effect of "dieter's breath," where a foul smell emanated from excessive dieting. Although the settings varied, a campaign for Palmolive soap kept the same theme throughout

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130 Friedan, 17. Metrecal was a chalk-like tablet that quelled hunger by swelling up in the stomach.
1963: A woman notices her husband looking at another woman. It is someone from her past who is exactly her age (a former schoolmate, for example) but who looks much younger. The husband tells his wife that the other woman does not look like she could be the same age, fueling the wife's feelings of inferiority. In each advertisement, the photograph shows the wife staring jealously at the husband as he ogles the other woman. The ad implied that if the wife used Palmolive soap, she too could have a complexion that looked years younger. The ads also fueled the fear that a husband could and would leave a wife who did not actively try to maintain a youthful and fit appearance. A seductive advertisement for Cutex promoted a new sexualized femininity -- prefiguring the more sexualized advertising landscape of the coming years -- with their nail polish campaign "Forever Female Colors." The nail polish belonged to a woman who was "part-angel, part-siren, and always a woman."

Taken together, such advertisements told women that although there were a variety of options open to them, they had better not forget to attend to their appearance. A thin, youthful, and sexually appealing image had become a necessity in the changing cultural and social climate of postwar America, whether one chose career, family, or both. Women competed against one another in the quest for youth and sensuality, with the standards becoming more unattainable over time. The sexualization of femininity was further sanctified and ingrained by the more visual media of television and film. The underlying messages in the pages of women's magazines, on television, and in film was that women had to make difficult choices regarding career and family. Whatever they chose, however, they should be careful to safeguard their femininity and make the

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most of their feminine assets. The appeal of the sensual single girl was growing, and women -- both married and single -- took notice.
CHAPTER THREE
Deconstructing Whore-Madonna:
Singles, Sex, and The Barbie Revolution

Tonight you’re mine, completely
you give your love so sweetly
tonight the light of love is in your eyes
but will you love me tomorrow?138

While middle-aged women struggled with issues of fulfillment and young wives tried to embody new ideals of femininity, a new generation of women busied itself developing its own set of values. This group of first-wave baby boom women would grow to embrace both the increased sexual freedom in American society and the spirit of individualism and activism embraced by their male counterparts. Young women negotiated a new cold war female identity by the mid-1960s, one that would provide a springboard for the women’s liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. By the early 1960s, the impact of the sexual revolution on young people plagued middle America. Over the decade, the appeal of the swinging single life increasingly competed with the ideal of the nuclear family, and this found added promulgation in the popular culture. By the end of the 1960s, women questioned the very institutions of society themselves: marriage, family, motherhood, and separate spheres for women and men. The sexy single girl emerged as a new icon of femininity, a far cry from the spinster of yesteryear and a dire threat to married women. In fact, by the late 1960s, sex manuals like The Sensuous Woman capitalized on the mounting fears of more traditional women, giving them advice on how to incorporate the sexual revolution into their marriages before they got left by the wayside.

This shift in morality would be spearheaded by the younger generation and propelled by America's fascination with youth. A new sensual sentiment among the teens and college-aged women was nurtured in the late 1950s and early 1960s as they came of age. By the late 1950s, a latent rebellion against conformity and sexual repression seemed ready to rise to the surface among America's teens and young adults. A plastic personification of the impending shift in mores materialized as the 1950s drew to a close when an eleven and one-half inch revolutionary appeared on the scene as an icon for the burgeoning "dangerously sensual" liberated woman. Launched in 1959 by Ruth Handler and marketed by toy company Mattel to young girls, Barbie became one of the most enduring icons of popular culture in American history. She embodied all of the conflicting messages women and girls received during the cold war era, and she foreshadowed what was to come. Her unanticipated popularity proved to be a barometer of a profound shift in attitudes and behavior, prefiguring the women's liberation movement, the revival of feminism, and the fruition of the sexual revolution. Prior to Barbie, little girls played with baby dolls in preparation for motherhood. Handler wanted to create an independent role model for young girls, one that would encourage them to embrace life as a single young woman. In addition to packaging her in typically female roles like ballet dancer or nurse, she was also intentionally marketed in nontraditional female occupations, a doctor, a pilot, and even an astronaut before women were allowed in the space program. Boyfriend Ken arrived on the scene two years later and was purposely positioned as an accessory. He was given hard plastic hair, for example, in contrast to Barbie's flowing locks, so girls would focus on
and identify with Barbie. She struck a responsive chord with young girls and
their mothers, and Mattel capitalized on her timeliness for decades to come.\textsuperscript{139}

Busty, beautiful, forever young, and unmistakably female, Barbie
became a phenomenon. Chastised by many for her unrealistic proportions and
anorexic figure, she continued to outperform the competition regardless of her
detractors' complaints. Starting with Christie, Barbie's African-American friend
launched in 1968, the line of dolls became multiethnic, multicultural, and
multitalented; all, however, continued to be unrealistically thin with proportions
that would cause them to topple over if they were human. She was an icon for
which the female youth of America had searched: a "dangerously sensual"
independent woman. Objectification and unattainable standards of beauty were
to be the price for such liberation and empowerment.

By 1963, Barbie's success was lauded in the popular press. \textit{Life} Magazine
featured a spread of Barbie's enviable wardrobe in its "Modern Living" section in
the August 8 issue, in an article entitled "The Most Popular Doll in Town."\textsuperscript{140} The
article noted that Barbie was the most popular doll in toy history and that she
had propelled Mattel into the number one position in toy manufacturing.
Additionally, Mattel was now the biggest clothing manufacturer in terms of
number of outfits produced. Indeed, much of the profit from the Barbie
enterprise came from clothing and accessory sales for the doll and her
companions. Barbie had a national fan club and received an average of five
hundred letters per week.\textsuperscript{141} A two-page fashion spread highlighted her
expensive wardrobe. Many of the outfits were meant to promote traditional
notions of femininity: baby-sitter, nurse, ballerina, stewardess. However, Barbie

\textsuperscript{139} For a complete history of Barbie, see Marco Tosa, \textit{Barbie: Four Decades of Fashion, Fantasy, and Fun}


\textsuperscript{141} "The Most Popular Doll in Town," 55.
also had a multitude of alluring evening dresses which promoted a more independent and sexualized femininity. \(^{142}\) The article took no moral position on the "Barbie Revolution," aside from noting that many real life fathers were dismayed by the fact that they now had an additional woman in the house to clothe. \(^{143}\)

By 1964, criticism of Barbie and her influence on young girls became more pronounced. A short anonymous column in the April 27, 1964 issue of *Nation* entitled "The Barbie-Doll Set" warned:

> Parents laughed in 1959 when their kiddies first began to play with Barbie. Don't laugh. Teen-focused play-fantasies are rearranging the souls of girls between the ages of 6 and 15. Barbie threatens to make a generation of vipers that will cause men to plead for the return of momism. \(^{144}\)

*Nation* reported that Barbie had been a topic of discussion at a recent symposium on teenagers at the University of California Medical School. Panelists warned that the doll forced young girls into early maturation, fostering premature dating and teen-aged marriage. The article reported that although the dolls were relatively cheap, the accessories kept consumers coming back for more and ensured steady growth for its manufacturer. Mattel grossed $78,030,661 in the 1962-1963 fiscal year, a fifty-eight per cent increase over the previous year. Moreover, Barbie's popularity expanded, with her fan club receiving a whopping ten thousand letters a week. To further capitalize on her popularity Mattel launched *Barbie* magazine, which had a subscriber base of one hundred

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\(^{142}\) "The Most Popular Doll in Town," 56-57.

\(^{143}\) "The Most Popular Doll in Town," 55.

\(^{144}\) "The Barbie-Doll Set," *Nation*, 27 April 1964, 405. Momism referred to the overbearing, domineering mothers of the prewar and early postwar years who, it was surmised, did harm to children by lavishing too much attention on them.
thousand. One young subscriber reported, "I used to read my mother's magazines. Now my mother is reading my magazines."\textsuperscript{145}

Later that year, William K. Zinsser wrote a more detailed analysis of the impact of what he dubbed the "Barbie Revolution"\textsuperscript{146} in a December 12, 1964 \textit{Saturday Evening Post} article entitled "Barbie is a Million-Dollar Doll."\textsuperscript{147} Zinsser lamented the fact that she had become the embodiment of little girls' fantasies. Barbie was "everything that America's little girls want to be when they cross over into Teenland. Her body is long-legged and full bosomed"; she was "infinitely well-dressed," "a person of sensitivity and taste, a fit model for American girlhood"\textsuperscript{148} as defined by the culture of consumption and American definitions of female beauty. Real life fathers, he noted, were likely working overtime to outfit Barbie and keep her living the good life: there were even outfits for Barbie's dog. Her fan club had some five hundred thousand members, some of whom were grandmothers, indicating that she had an appeal beyond her target market. Zinsser criticized Barbie and the message she sent:

\begin{quote}
Until recently, most girls imagined themselves as the mothers of their dolls and wanted them to be soft, shapeless, helpless and simply dressed. But Barbie is not a kid to be mothered. Chic, sophisticated and sexy, she runs off at night to places Raggedy Ann never dreamed of, and God only knows what goes on when she's out on a date with Ken.\textsuperscript{149}
\end{quote}

He further contended that Barbie forced young girls to grow up too fast, and that she was a "symbol of the American urge to hurry our children into the trappings of adulthood, if possible eliminating their youth altogether."\textsuperscript{150}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[145] Joanne Pecci, as quoted in "The Barbie-Doll Set," 405.
\item[146] William K. Zinsser, "Barbie is a Million-Dollar Doll," \textit{Saturday Evening Post}, 12 December, 1964, 73.
\item[147] Zinsser, 72-73.
\item[148] Zinsser, 72.
\item[149] Zinsser, 73.
\item[150] Zinsser, 73.
\end{footnotes}
according to Zinsser, was a microcosmic symbol for all that was wrong with America. She encouraged worship of materialism, championed narcissism, and advocated vapidity — she was never, he noted, seen with a book:

> Anyone looking for deeper values in the world of Barbie is looking in the wrong place. With its emphasis on possessions and its worship of appearances, it is modern America in miniature — a tiny parody of our pursuit of the beautiful, the material and the trivial.¹⁵¹

He mocked Ruth Handler's assertions that she meant Barbie to be a role model for young girls in pursuit of alternatives to motherhood. Zinsser apparently had no problem with prepubescent girls fantasizing about motherhood. Handler cited the fact that many parents considered Barbie educational for their daughters, another point Zinsser did not buy. Interestingly, both articles from 1964 alluded to the fact that Barbie affected not just young girls but also their mothers and even their grandmothers. Perhaps some of the empowerment embedded in Barbie's smug gaze appealed to a generation of women who had been duped by the feminine mystique, but that notion seemed lost on men like Zinsser. More importantly, the articles testified to American society's love of youth in the early to mid-1960s. Indeed, mothers likely picked up as many cultural cues from Barbie about fashion and femininity as did their daughters. If Barbie caused young girls to grow up too quickly, she also likely encouraged older women to look younger and more desirable. Indeed, youth culture would have a profound impact on American culture by the late 1960s. Additionally, Barbie's popularity with young girls signaled that the culture was on the brink of radical change. At once propelled by and also propelling the "Barbie Revolution," children of the first wave of the baby-boom redefined American values as youth culture took center stage.

¹⁵¹ Zinsser, 73.
After the election of Kennedy, young women were further motivated by the spirit of activism that galvanized the energy of young people across America. The widening generation gap broke down reliance on the outmoded values of their parents’ generation, and young people struggled to redefine morality. The subject of single women, premarital sex and its consequences, and changing mores and values for singles were contested throughout the culture and in the media in the 1950s and early 1960s. By the early 1960s, after the introduction of the pill had removed a major deterrent to premarital sex, trepidation about the impact of the sexual revolution on the youth of America increased. These concerns surfaced in women’s magazines, film, and television. In some instances, this resulted in a backlash against premarital sex and female sexual liberation as soon as the early 1960s. Eventually, however, the taboo surrounding premarital sex was shattered by a younger generation breaking free of convention. By the end of the decade, the counterculture and radical feminism would seem to erupt out of nowhere, yet an examination of media culture from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s reveals that in fact the culture had been wrestling with these issues for years, with Hollywood taking the lead.

By the late 1950s, Hollywood began freeing itself from the constraints of the self-imposed production code that had been in effect since 1947. The code was designed to placate government concerns about communist intervention and to forestall direct government involvement in the industry. Spurred on by the growing competition of television, which was still hemmed in by sponsors and FCC regulations, studio executives eagerly experimented with racier subject matter, including the sexual revolution and singles culture. Even during the days of the code and the blacklist -- from 1947 through the late 1950s -- Hollywood writers, producers, and directors managed to produce films that challenged the
status quo. As Barry Keith Grant\textsuperscript{152} and Margot A. Henriksen\textsuperscript{153} have noted, film noir and suspense in the 1940s and 1950s -- dominated by the work of director Alfred Hitchcock -- presented images of women and families that were at odds with social conventions, chipping away at the mantle of conformity in the 1950s. Fifties films like *Rebel Without A Cause* (1955) and *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) exposed the restlessness of America’s youth, prefiguring the social dissent that would culminate in the early 1960s in sit-ins, the formation of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and the Berkeley Free Speech Movement. Westerns like *High Noon* (1952) addressed controversial subjects in thinly veiled metaphor, and the subtext of science fiction films like *Them!* (1954) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) expressed the fears and anxieties of the 1950s in light of the nuclear arms race.\textsuperscript{154}

Of all the films battering social conventions, the one that did the most thorough job of ripping apart the Puritanical values of small town American was *Peyton Place* (1957).\textsuperscript{155} The film criticized the conformity of 1950s America. It glorified one man’s efforts to speak out against injustice and the constraints and pitfalls of “suburban bliss.” It challenged the ideology of domestic containment. More importantly, it was extremely critical of sexual repression and quite sympathetic to the complexities surrounding the issues of premarital sex, adultery, and abortion. Compared to treatments of the subject later in the early 1960s, the film was quite radical. More importantly, the film was very popular

\textsuperscript{152} Barry Keith Grant, *Film Genre Reader* “Notes on Film Noir” (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 169-182.

\textsuperscript{153} Margot A. Henriksen, *Dr. Strangelove’s America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 128-130


\textsuperscript{155} *Peyton Place*, dir. Mark Robson, prod. Jerry Wald (20th Century Fox, 1957). All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the film.
and received nominations for several academy awards in 1958, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actress, and Best Supporting Actor.\textsuperscript{156}

In the film, protagonist Allison MacKenzie is a bright, aspiring young writer who wants to finish high school and leave for the big city. She is chaste, but only because her widowed mother keeps such tight reins on her. The audience sympathizes with Allison, who reminds her boyfriend that she has the same desires as he does. She claims she never wants to get married, just have “lots of lovers.” When her mother chastises her for kissing a boy, noting that it will give her a reputation, she states, “I already have one mother: the wrong kind!” She has been, much to her chagrin, labeled a prude by her peers.

Her mother, Constance MacKenzie, is an independent woman who owns a dress shop. Ostensibly, the pain from the loss of her husband has sent her libido and her motherly instincts into a deep freeze - her sexual repression and her cold attitude toward her daughter go hand-in-hand. She is being courted by the only eligible bachelor in town, the new school principal Michael Rossi, who seems the epitome of an enlightened new man. He encourages Constance to let him into her life, but she claims she has shut that door long ago. It is finally revealed that Connie’s repression comes from the fact that Allison was fathered by a married man. Allison is in fact illegitimate. Upon hearing the news, Allison runs away to New York to be a writer. However, even this alarming revelation does not stop Mike from loving Connie. He breaks through her hardened shell and desires to stay with her even after she reveals the truth. This has a humanizing effect on Connie, thawing out her sexual frigidity and making her a warmer person in general.

\textsuperscript{156} For more information, see the Internet Movie Data Base at imdb.com.
The fate of Allison's best friend, Selena, however, offers an even more startling indictment of conformity and repression. Selena, raped by her drunken stepfather, obtains an illegal abortion from the town doctor who is sworn by her to secrecy. He, however, extracts a confession from her stepfather before driving him out of town. Selena then marries and tries to get on with her life. When her husband is off in the service, the stepfather returns and tries to rape her again, but this time she murders him and buries him in the back yard. She ends up on trial for murder and refuses to tell the entire story for fear her husband will be the subject of ridicule and disgrace in the town. That she would rather go to jail for life than risk social embarrassment is a scathing indictment of the prevailing social mores in Peyton Place. Selena is vindicated, however, when the doctor breaks his confidence to her at considerable risk to himself, since he had performed an illegal abortion. At the climax of the film, the doctor delivers a potent diatribe against the residents of Peyton Place which stands as a virtual negation of the stereotype of the 1950s, blasting the town for its hypocrisy and fear of standing up for justice. The jury finds her innocent, her marriage remains intact, and the evil stepfather is dead. Peyton Place is a better place for it.

Even the fate of the secondary characters proves illuminating. Rodney, a wealthy young man bound for Harvard, falls in love with a "loose" lower-class woman named Betty. His father insists that he call off the wedding. He acquiesces for a time, but not without a fight. He finally succumbs to familial pressure, and then quips to his father, "I'll marry a cold fish from Boston, have one child, and cheat for the rest of my life like you!" Eventually he is lured back to Betty. It is not just the sex that draws him back -- he actually is in love with her, contrary to what the prevailing social norms would have young people believe. They marry, he goes off to war and gets killed, and the father ends up
apologizing to Betty for judging her. *Peyton Place* clearly challenged the norms of 1950s America. The film depicted the realities and complications of sexual desire and in fact sent the message that abstinence was abnormal. It decried the intolerance of post-McCarthy America and complicated the image of the 1950s as serene. The women in the film offered alternative role models to the happy housewives on 1950s sitcoms, and its popularity signaled that 1950s America was on the verge of change.

Helen Gurley Brown’s *Sex and the Single Girl*, published in 1962, fully supported the Barbie Revolution and echoed the sentiments of Allison MacKenzie. Brown encouraged women to enjoy the single life, ignore the scare tactics in women’s magazines, and realize that there were many men who found single career women sexy and alluring. Although Brown did intimate that some women might never marry -- a radical concept in its day by any measure -- her book mainly targeted educated, employed women who, she assured readers, could live happy single lives, find professional fulfillment, have hosts of men in their lives, and still get married later. Brown herself put off marriage into her thirties and ended up “very successful,” which she defines as follows in her opening page:

David is a motion picture producer, forty-four, brainy, charming and sexy. He was sought after by many a Hollywood starlet as well as some less flamboyant but more deadly types. And I got him! We have two Mercedes-Benzes, one hundred acres of virgin forest near San Francisco, a Mediterranean house overlooking the Pacific, a full-time maid and a good life.

She went on to note that, although she was not pretty, college-educated, or busty, she was able to attract him because she worked for seventeen years “to become the kind of woman who might interest him” and was “just worldly”

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158 Brown, 3
enough, relaxed enough, financially secure enough, and adorned with enough glitter to attract him."\textsuperscript{159}

Her advice likely seemed refreshing for young, intelligent women who wanted to pursue careers but felt social pressure to marry young and stay in the domestic sphere. Brown was living proof that a successful career could give women the leverage to go into marriage without the financial and emotional dependency and frustration young women had to endure when they gave up their aspirations in order to marry. After all, stated Brown, a man could always leave his wife for someone else, especially with the new preponderance of sexy single girls available. She noted that she had had moments of doubt about her marital future, but was willing to take a chance rather than marrying just to marry. She put forth the revolutionary notion that women could have babies into their forties. She warned women to pay no attention to the scare tactics in women’s magazines telling them that postponing marriage would render them spinsters for life. She encouraged women to take the time to really explore the possibilities before settling into marriage.\textsuperscript{160}

Regarding sex, Brown’s book was equally liberating. She revealed the fact that many women who had had premarital sex enjoyed much more fulfilling sex lives than their bored, married counterparts. If women were not willing to have premarital sex, she did not condemn them; however, she did advocate experimentation and even having affairs with married men. In her chapter “How To Be Sexy,” she explained that babies and young people had a natural desire for sex and a healthy attitude toward their sexuality, which society then effectively stifled. Drawing on Kinsey’s work, she surmised that most of the problems with female frigidity in marriage likely stemmed from the fact that

\textsuperscript{159} Brown, 4
\textsuperscript{160} Brown, 3-7.
women were forced to keep their sexuality locked up in their adolescent years and then had trouble unlocking it. She defined sexy women as the ones who had orgasms regularly (a third of all women, she noted). She poked holes in institutional mores and in the more reactionary messages suffusing the popular culture:

> Most of the single women I’ve known well in the last twenty years have experienced sex gratification with someone at some time, if only with the man they later married. And they were concerned with their own enjoyment or lack of it for two reasons: They instinctively knew that a girl with a “natural” predilection toward sex is sexy. They also figured as long as they were involved in an affair, they deserved some of the joys as well as most of the headaches.

Brown’s book was riddled with contradictory messages, matching the larger cultural confusion about sex and gender. Although advocating economic independence and professional success, Brown in chapter after chapter told women how to dress, look, and act to attract a man. From “The Shape You’re In” to “Kisses and Make-up” to “The Apartment,” Brown provided advice to women on how to be sexy, alluring, desirable, and fulfilled in order to draw men into their lives. She presented a blueprint for the construction of the dangerously sensual woman. Although Brown claimed that natural beauty was not a precondition to being a successful, sexy single girl, her message was that a woman had better make the absolute most of what she was given -- or else. Brown enshrined this ideology at *Cosmopolitan* magazine when she took over as editor in 1965.

As historian Beth Bailey argued in her chapter in *The Sixties: From Memory to History*, "Sexual Revolutions," the early phase of the sexual revolution

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161 Brown, 65-70.
162 Brown, 69-70
163 Brown, 167-185; 203-223; 119-137, respectively.
prescribed strict roles for the sexes and engendered a pervasive double standard for men and women. Hugh Hefner's belief in the merits of bachelorhood over marriage sought to objectify women as passive playthings of well-to-do men. While Brown has often been seen as the female ally or equivalent of Hefner, her outlook was vastly different. Although Brown advocated a sexy, single lifestyle for women, she clung to traditional goals like security, material prosperity, and ultimately marriage. Being comfortable with one’s sexuality and single status meant developing an attitude sure to snare a worthy man, perhaps even one of the playboys. Like Hefner, Brown fed into the consumer culture and burgeoning sex market of the 1950s and early 1960s. The difference in their objectives stemmed from the economic subservience of women in this era. While many women worked, most held lower paying “pink collar” jobs insufficient to sustain the good life. For the majority of women, upward mobility could only be secured through marriage to a financially successful man. It took the feminist movement and a radical shift in values spearheaded by a new generation to challenge traditional gender roles and provide the economic opportunities needed for women to forego marriage altogether.

The 1961 film *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* offered viewers, through the character of Holly Golightly, a voyeuristic foray into the world of an independent, single, urban woman, a female protagonist who was a near personification of Brown’s archetype. Holly offered viewers a chance to try on a new image. Her physical appearance was actually one of the most revolutionary aspects of her character. A slap in the face to *Playboy* definitions of female sexuality, Audrey Hepburn’s

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164 D’Emilio and Freedman, 303-304


Holly was quite thin, flat-chested, at once sophisticated and sporty. She appeared in physical form to be the polar opposite of voluptuous stars of the 1950s like Marilyn Monroe. Here was a sophisticated, urban socialite, beholden to nobody and unwilling even to give a name to her cat, who she called simply Cat. Disinterested in marriage, making a career out of being an escort to various “superrats,” and trying to snare a rich man while living life on her own terms, she initially seems like the ultimate liberated woman. Although she is usually depicted fending off sexual advances, she is coded as sexually active but in control of her choices.

After she meets writer Paul Vorjack, who is the kept man of a sardonic, middle-aged married woman, she begins to get emotionally attached to him. She fights this entanglement every step of the way. Over time, it is revealed that Holly is a phony, the creation of a Hollywood producer looking for a new star. She is actually Lulamae Barnes, a country girl who got married at the age of fourteen and then ran away from home. Her only goal is to secure a life for herself and her “slow” brother Fred, the only person about whom she really cares. Her plan goes awry when Fred is killed in a car accident. After a period of mourning, Holly buries her feelings for Paul and becomes involved with a wealthy Brazilian man. However, he subsequently dumps her when it is revealed that she was the unwitting participant in a scandal with a local mob kingpin. Although Holly is cleared of all charges, she loses her wealthy man. The film ends with Holly chasing after her cat, whom she, just moments before, had pushed out of a cab in a desperate fit to retain her independence. Paul holds her and Cat as she weeps. Holly recognizes that love and security are important to her. Alas, she is revealed as a frightened, hurt little girl who had been masquerading as an independent woman. It is her love for Cat, however, that
ultimately causes her to break down and feel her pent-up emotions. Paul is there to pick up the pieces, and viewers witness a classic fairy tale ending with a decidedly modern spin.

The film presents some interesting contradictions. On the one hand, it is the same old story: only love saves Holly from an empty life of decadence and meaninglessness. On the other hand, Holly's lifestyle was not depicted as pitiable. On the contrary, it was exciting, full of men — just as Brown promised — and there were really no negative consequences to her sexual experimentation. Paul loved her, virgin or not, and rather than the classic story of the "good" woman trying to tame the perennial bachelor, roles were reversed. Paul was the one longing for love and security — Holly was the self-proclaimed wild thing. Interestingly, Paul could not chastise Holly for her sugar daddy existence, for he was no better than she. He made a living as the lover of an older married woman. He gave all this up, however, and decided to try to make it on his own. Although he was far from financially secure, the implication was that he would try to dedicate himself to writing and in the process offer some security to Holly. Holly both sells out women's liberation and manifests it. She is but another example of the inherent contradictions about women and liberation embedded in the popular culture of the prefeminist period. Additionally, Holly's character prefigured the antimaterialist sentiments brewing in the culture. She was against ownership, gave up a screen test in Hollywood on a whim, and ultimately found happiness with a struggling writer rather than a rich playboy.

By the early 1960s, teens and young women who comprised the early wave of the baby boom seemed to be headed in Brown's direction. Concerns about the sexual revolution, the media's focus on sex, and the impact of sex on America's youth rose. An aspiring young journalist named Gloria Steinem
sounded the first alarm. In a 1962 article for *Esquire*, “The Moral Disarmament of Betty Coed,” Steinem informed Americans about the growing sophistication of America’s youth regarding the issue of premarital sex. Steinem suggested that scare tactics like fears of pregnancy outside of marriage would not work anymore, and she cautioned that “writers in and out of Hollywood should be warned that they can no longer build on plots of lost virginity or fainting pregnant heroines and expect to be believed.” She informed readers that the issue of sex on campus was so matter-of-fact that young women thought the topic hardly cause for debate. Steinem observed:

If there’s one thing that distinguishes the current crop of sixteen-to twenty-five year olds from the generations of ten or even five years ago, it is the de-emphasis of sex. As a bewildered women’s college dean put it, “It isn’t that they’re preoccupied with sex, it’s that they accept it so easily and then turn to you and say, ‘And now what?’”

The article uncovered a growing spirit of individualism among young college students. Steinem presented a portrait of young women who respected individuality and who were slow to judge their peers by group standards regarding morality. Steinem stated, “For better or worse, the emphasis is now on the individual, and group judgments of individual actions are out of date.” She cited a national magazine survey which concluded that “nearly all respondents, male or female, virginal or not, phrased in some way the opinion that ‘sexual behavior is something you have to decide by yourself.’” The impact of the sexual revolution and a growing spirit of individualism had radically altered traditional values about premarital sex among America’s youth. The fact that young men also agreed that premarital sex functioned as a matter

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168 Steinem, "Moral Disarmament," 99
169 Steinem, "Moral Disarmament," 99
170 Steinem, "Moral Disarmament," 155
of personal choice assuaged one traditional fear, the idea that premarital sex would make a woman unmarriageable later in life. To the contrary, Steinem quoted one bachelor who suggested that "nothing is less interesting than virginity." That the article appeared in *Esquire*, with a rather progressive male audience, is no surprise. The sentiments expressed in the article dovetailed nicely with the agenda of Hugh Hefner's bachelor prototype, for whom marriage and family were a trap. However, the article also reflected a growing spirit of female empowerment, one that eventually transcended the male-dominated *Playboy* culture of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Steinem's article suggested that using scare tactics to prevent premarital sex would not work on America's youth, as women moved away from the outmoded victim mentality of men "getting them pregnant." Young women appeared eager to take more responsibility for their sexual choices, seemingly finding strength in the new array of options regarding premarital sex and contraception. Steinem argued that women had started taking birth control into their own hands, obtaining diaphragms and oral contraceptives without waiting for the man to handle it.

Steinem concluded by noting that although the winds of change were upon society, many Americans continued to "trace much of their own and women's unhappiness to an abandoning of traditional roles." She pointed out that for these people, "women's sexual freedom is a frightening development difficult to accept." She also quoted Margaret Mead's quip that the major impediment to women's liberation was that there were not enough liberated men to go around. Both Mead's and Steinem's observations proved to be on the mark.

171 Steinem, "Moral Disarmament," 157
172 Steinem, "Moral Disarmament," 153
173 Steinem, "Moral Disarmament," 157
More conservative women's magazines, and to a lesser degree in the larger popular press, viewed the impact of the sexual revolution as a cause for concern among the populace by the early 1960s, particularly when it applied to white middle-class teenagers, or what some dubbed "respectable girls." In a 1961 article entitled "How To Tell Your Daughter Why She Must Keep Her Self Respect," Better Homes and Gardens readers accepted advice on how to instill morality in young women in order to prevent them from having premarital sex. Arguing against using traditional scare tactics like getting pregnant or contracting venereal disease, author Howard Whitman provided a male perspective on premarital sex. Waiting, he contented, was a sure sign of respect and love. Boys had a pervasive double standard, and most boys surveyed preferred to marry virgins -- even though they did not oppose sleeping with women they did not plan to marry. He offered some compelling evidence from young men to that effect:

A boy of twenty-two: "I know it's wrong and inconsistent. I have had and will continue to have intercourse before marriage. But I just can't face the idea of marrying a girl who isn't a virgin."

A college freshman: "I want my wife to be all mine -- undamaged by premarital relations with anyone else. But I will take advantage of every opportunity I get with girls who are the type you go out with for sex."

Whitman went on to conclude that young women were naturally more sexually mature than young men, automatically associating sex with love. Men, on the other hand, often confused lust with love. A strong woman could educate her young man on the benefits of waiting. He seemed to dismiss entirely the idea that a young woman could have a libido. Instead, he based his argument on the assumption that women were only "putting out" in a misguided attempt to

175 Whitman, 118.
get love through lust. His sole reference to the Kinsey report came in a word of caution for girls not to get carried away by the article's revelations and forego boys all together, like the "spinster whose only reaction to the Kinsey reports was that men were just a bunch of 'prancing and leering goats.'" On the contrary, girls needed to be understanding and guide men through this precarious stage of sexual development. Perhaps the last remnants of a bygone era, this article clearly divided women into two camps: good girls who did not engage in premarital sex and bad girls who did. It should be noted that the author aimed his article at mothers, giving them ammunition to help their daughters make good decisions about their relationships with young men.

Two years later, the problem had become more overt. In "Too Much Sex On Campus," Ladies' Home Journal alerted its readership to the epidemic of premarital sex on campus, noting that about fifty percent of all college women were having premarital sex. This resulted in hasty marriages, rising divorce rates, and college dropouts. Author Jennie Loitman Brown, a lawyer and judge, commented on the differences she saw:

> Just lately I have seen an appalling number of girls in trouble. They come to me for help. These are not the tough skid-row girls of former days, but the cream of the crop, girls from comfortable backgrounds, girls whom colleges have carefully selected for admission.

Brown, like Whitman, referenced the male double standard, telling the story of a young college freshman from a good background who was seduced by a boyfriend who claimed to love her. Eventually, he left her for his virginal girlfriend back home. She was left devastated, and worse yet, pregnant. She had an abortion, felt plagued with guilt and feelings of inferiority, and dropped out

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176 Whitman, 121.
178 Brown, 48.
of school. Brown, however, observed that the girl felt overwhelming peer pressure from other girls to abandon traditional values. These girls felt that "to be popular they must abandon virtue and that if a girl remains chaste, she's likely to be stricken from available-for-dates lists."179

Her article did not, however, place the responsibility solely on the girl. Rather, she criticized colleges that permissively failed to enforce curfews in women's dormitories and developed lax attitudes toward male visitors. Moreover, colleges did not provide adequate counseling services to deal with the fallout stemming from their own lack of control over their student body. Colleges, she felt, wanted to get rid of young women who found themselves in dire circumstances because they feared scandal would damage the reputation of the college. Similarly, they were reluctant to offer counseling services and sex education for fear that such services would call attention to the problem. She also maintained that parents had a responsibility to educate young women to the nuances of courtship and to alert their girls about the pitfalls of caving to peer pressure and the male libido. Although the article hinted that changing values had surfaced, the new attitudes of young women belonged to a small but influential minority of "older girls completing graduate studies, some girls from broken or permissive homes where no limits were set on behavior, some defiant girls rebelling against authority and some girls whose parents were spiritually bankrupt."180 This was not a full blown sexual revolution, in other words.

Scare tactics continued to be invoked, in concert with the more subtle advice literature to mothers and girls. "The Deadly Favor" discussed the dangers of the growing illegal abortion market. In graphic detail, it examined the rising number of amateurs filling the void left as more and more trained physicians

179 Brown, 48.
180 Brown, 48.
refrained from doing illegal but "professional" abortions.\textsuperscript{181} This was compounded by the fact that Cuba, once a hotspot for American women looking for safe abortions, was no longer an option after 1959. Using methods that were unsafe and often ineffective, opportunists were killing and maiming young women in larger and larger numbers. If the women did not die during the procedure, many were left sterile and emotionally traumatized. Planned Parenthood estimated that there were as many as 1,200,000 illegal abortions in the United States in 1963.\textsuperscript{182}

The article did not come out in support of legal abortion as an option, arguing that that would be like issuing a license to be promiscuous. It reported that an overwhelming number of doctors concluded that the sexual revolution and its attendant complications stemmed entirely from parents' lack of communication with their children. Young women did not have enough information about prevention, abstinence, or alternatives to abortion. The analysis ended on a stridently pro-life note, advocating adoption rather than abortion, which it viewed as nothing less than "destroying life" and "playing God."\textsuperscript{183}

Another less dramatic consequence of unwanted pregnancy was addressed in a 1965 \textit{Readers' Digest} article entitled "If Only They Had Waited."\textsuperscript{184} An anonymous writer told the story of a young couple -- high school seniors -- who had premarital sex and consequently abandoned all their future aspirations due to unwanted pregnancy. Interestingly, the story unfolded from the perspective of the boy's mother, who felt shocked that her model son, voted "Most Likely to Succeed," had gotten his equally accomplished girlfriend

\textsuperscript{182} Davidson, 54.
\textsuperscript{183} Davidson, 56.
\textsuperscript{184} "If Only They Had Waited," \textit{Reader's Digest}, January 1965, Volume 86, 85-89.
pregnant. His father, a school counselor and high school history teacher, proved equally shocked and disappointed. The son insisted that he and his girlfriend loved each other and wanted to get married rather than give the baby up for adoption, and his parents were at once moved by his bravado and saddened by his naivété. They told him that this decision would preclude his going to college and that he would never be able to support a wife and child in the fashion he desired. The mother recounted a bittersweet wedding and her son's job-hunting, which ended with him finding a position as a gas station attendant. She reflected on the situation:

It was easy to point a finger at society, with the mass media emphasizing gratification of sexual drives as natural and glamorous. Or perhaps at the 20th century, in which so many people fear that there may be no tomorrow—only today. It was easy to blame the prevalence of attitudes that ridicule chastity as old-fashioned. It was harder to blame myself.185

This anonymous voice went on to explain that she, the mother, felt responsible. She did not attend church services, nor did her husband Paul. She provided no spiritual or moral code in its place. She had encouraged dating in hopes of fostering normal social growth and did not trust her instincts when she saw that her son and his girlfriend spent too much time together. That the two seemed model children only made it more tragic, as she realized and confessed: "I was a guilty member of the lax society I condemned."186 This article appeared in the popular press outside the women's sphere and suggested that mainstream America grew more and more concerned over the decade about the rapidly changing values and behaviors of America's youth. The articles in women's magazines warning parents about the dangers of neglecting their duties indicated that the younger generation was not intimidated by the social codes of

185 "If Only They Had Waited," 87.
186 "If Only They Had Waited," 88.
their parents' generation. In the latter article, the consequences proved less
dramatic. Pregnancy did not bring abandonment or sterility, it resulted in
marriage, albeit one that was headed for hard times. However, this
demonstrated that young men were not as invested in the double standard as
some earlier experts suggested. This young man actually did love his girlfriend,
reflecting a new morality in monogamous premarital relationships that were
developing among America's youth.

A Newsweek article from the same year addressed the issue of sex on
campus, but it sought to quell the hysteria by reassuring readers that the sexual
revolution on campus was being exaggerated. Based on a survey conducted by
a Stanford dean (but not conducted at Stanford), three out of four college girls
were virgins and most girls only had premarital sex with men they were
planning to marry. The article, however, was based on a small sample of forty-nine girls predominately at women's colleges and likely did not reflect the true
behavior of average co-educational college students, as society would later
discover.187 What it did reflect, however, was a burgeoning consternation in
America about the changing values of America's youth and the origins of a right-
wing or conservative force that would eventually provide a constituency for
future President Richard Nixon and his silent majority. With feature articles on
the subject appearing in Newsweek and Readers' Digest, the topic of premarital sex
among teens and college students had become a concern not only to mothers,
but to society in general.

Responding to the public obsession with youthful morality, journalist Gael
Greene embarked on a comprehensive study of America's college students. She
published her findings in the 1964 study entitled Sex and the College Girl.188 In it

she uncovered both a liberal trend and a conservative backlash brewing among young men and women across the nation. Greene interviewed six hundred fourteen students at one hundred two colleges and universities from geographically diverse areas of the nation in order to get a handle on the changing morality of America’s youth. Through an intense series of interviews with young women and men, she revealed a generation conflicted in its values and goals, testing both the hypothesis of liberalism offered by Gloria Steinem and the scare tactics of the more conservative press.

In her opening chapter, “Nice Girls Do,” Greene demonstrated that, whether or not college girls were actually having premarital sex, the old scare tactics of girls getting a “reputation,” or the notion that only “bad” girls had sex, were outmoded. However, she commented that all young women thought it necessary to at least feign open-mindedness about the subject, suggesting that peer pressure forced women to adopt attitudes about sex which they were not yet mature enough to carry off. She attributed this to the consumer culture which saw in teens and girls a lucrative market for their wares. Blaming advertisers who sought to capitalize on the growing baby boom market and the sex market, Greene commented that the pressure to grow up too fast began in the early teenaged years: “In her 30AA bra and Jackie Kennedy hairdo, she is a living, fire-breathing femme fatale at 14.” She further documented that teens spent “$25 million a year on deodorants, $20 million on lipstick, and $9 million on home permanents.”

Greene also linked the growing acceptance of premarital sex to fears of annihilation due to nuclear war, pointing out that young people felt it necessary to live for the moment. Greene’s interviews revealed a generation living in fear

\[189\] Greene, 21-28.
\[190\] Greene, 29.
and reacting against the world its parents created:

They react "live now." They react "how dare you tell me what to do-- you who made the world the way it is. They react, "I won’t think about it."

"I woke up one night and I thought, I am going to die a virgin," a Stanford coed recalled. "I decided it was time to do something about it." "During the Cuban crisis my best friend got on the phone with the boy she’d been dating," a Berkeley junior said. "She told him, ‘Listen, I’m ready to get laid.’" "We were sitting around," a Barnard senior said, "and we were telling each other how if this is really the end of the world coming, what would we do. It was the morning when no one knew what Russia would do about the Cuban blockade. We decided we’d run to the nearest frat house and grab the first available man."\(^{191}\)

Greene explained that most of the women interviewed made clear distinctions between promiscuity, which was defined as sex without love or monogamy, and premarital sex inside of a committed, monogamous relationship. Most college students supported the latter and resisted endorsing the former. Greene concluded that many young people were forming intense and lasting bonds outside of marriage as a way to find comfort in the age of nuclear anxiety while at the same time thumbing their noses at the traditional values of their elders. Many women, she found, only had premarital sex with the man they planned eventually to marry. Moreover, most of the college students thought promiscuity vulgar and wanted to distance themselves from such labels. Many remained virgins.\(^{192}\) However, the definition of virginity was being stretched to its limits. Anything but intercourse, including oral sex and heavy petting, was considered acceptable for the "virgin." Some even widened their definition to include vaginal sex in which the hymen was not broken.\(^{193}\) Sexual boundaries were so broad as to be rendered almost useless, but Greene’s

\(^{191}\) Greene, 30.
\(^{192}\) Greene, 31.
\(^{193}\) Greene, 112.
study determined that the distinction remained a significant one nonetheless for young women.

It was not fear of pregnancy, venereal disease, or botched abortions which kept them virginal. Rather, it was fear of what was later dubbed the "whore-madonna" complex: the notion that men could not abandon the deeply embedded double standard. It was acceptable for young men to have premarital sex, but that they still felt women who gave in to a man's advances were "loose" (whores), while they desired their wives to be virgins (madonnas). However hard they tried, they could not shed their ingrained preconceptions about premarital sex. 194 In her interviews with young men, Greene found that these fears had a basis in reality. Steinem's "virgin-as-bore" male prototypes were few and far between. Greene revealed that men themselves were confounded by the new rules. However much they wanted to adopt progressive attitudes, ingrained notions of women as either "whores" or "madonnas" were hard to erode. Many even admitted to "testing" girls they were serious about: if they did not give in, they were marriageable. Greene warned that "boys who think they are emancipated may discover, and even concede, they are far less emancipated than they thought." She offered the following words of a young Harvard man as evidence: "I used to say that it didn't matter if my wife were a virgin. But now I'm engaged and I realize it matters very much." 195 Greene concluded: "Because the role of passive female is traditional does not make it preferable. But the abandoning of traditional male-female roles is easier accomplished than adjusted to." 196

One of the more remarkable revelations of her study was the fact that

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194 Greene, 93-95.
195 Greene, 150.
196 Greene, 151.
women's sexual liberation was progressing at a faster rate than that of their male counterparts. Indeed, even the virginal holdouts acknowledged the difficulty of remaining "in tact." No woman would admit that she was withholding sex because she did not desire it. As Greene put it, at that point in time young women had taken the Kinsey report and the new literature on female sexuality to heart. Stated Greene, "to admit an underdeveloped libido is taboo. In this orgasm-oriented decade, it would be like denying your femininity." This was evidenced in a Michigan State senior who said, "I don't think boys have any idea at all about the female sex drive. There he stands wondering whether he can get away with kissing you and you're already deciding you might like to go to bed with him. Ironic, isn't it?"

The whore-madonna dilemma was echoed on the silver screen where films confronted, negotiated, and often tamed changing values regarding sex and marriage. Not surprisingly, Hollywood took an ambivalent stand on the issue. James Bond films glamorized the playboy lifestyle. Teen melodramas like Where the Boys Are (1960) and Splendor in the Grass (1961) depicted the longings and desires of young women. At first glance, Where The Boys Are 198 seems to be a rather trivial, reductionist, and reactionary commentary on the sexual revolution, especially when compared to Peyton Place. As Susan Douglas noted, the overt message is clear. Four girls go away for Spring break: three remain virgins and get their men; the one who gives in ends up a victim of date rape and almost kills herself by walking in front of a car.199 The film stacks up clearly on the side of the virgins, but the message is so contrived as to be barely believable.

The subtext of the film is however somewhat more revealing: even in a

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197 Greene, 95.
199 Douglas, 156-158.
film meant to alert girls to the dangers of being a whore, female sexual desire was acknowledged and recognized. It also portrays a culture whose institutions have fallen out of step with the realities of American society. Merritt, the protagonist, is an attractive intellectual who is introduced as she challenges her middle-aged, matronly female college professor while she is leading a class ostensibly about male-female relations. The text is outmoded and has no relevance to modern college women, states Merritt. After trying to quote Kinsey, she is shot down by the professor. When Merritt declares that there are certain instances when she feels it is acceptable for a woman to have premarital sex, she is sent to the dean -- not a very productive way of handing the problem of sex on campus, but a standard one.

As the film progresses, several of the virgins express the difficulty of abstaining, as the boys they date continually pressure them for sex. The boys seem equally confused. Rather than positioning sex as something women do in exchange for security or other benefits, it is clearly acknowledged that women have powerful sex drives and that it is difficult to resist the advances of men. Although the film ends on a note suggesting that they had better try, the film also touched the realities of the lives of young adults. The film also seems to prefigure Friedan's work in that Merritt is obviously extremely bright and bent on professional success. This does not at all detract from her ability to catch a man who is filthy rich, handsome, and has an I.Q. of 140 -- conveniently just two points higher than Merritt's. In fact, it is her intelligence that attracts him in the first place. Ultimately, the film does hammer home the pitfalls of the whore-madonna syndrome, as the promiscuous Melanie, stripped of her naiveté, laments that now no nice boy would ever want her. However, it takes a stab at the institutional framework that lagged behind the values of America's youth.
Melanie had no basis for making sexual decisions, no education about sexual relations, nobody to turn to for advice. She makes her choice on Merritt’s impetuous remarks in class. Melanie is depicted as a victim who is robbed of her innocence through her ignorance. The film served as a reminder to parents to keep tabs on their children -- Melanie’s folks thought she was in Chicago with her friend -- reflecting the growing concern in America about the impact of the sexual revolution on its youth. The reactionary tenor of the film likely signaled the growing effort of society to contain the sexual revolution.

Not all films of the early 1960s stacked up squarely on the side of abstinence. In the 1961 film *Splendor in the Grass*, Deanie, played by Natalie Wood, personifies the frustration single young women in their teens and twenties felt as they confronted the rapidly changing cultural and intellectual ideologies regarding female sexuality and premarital sex in a society that continued to uphold an outmoded value system based on a double standard for men and women regarding sexuality. Deanie’s mother is obsessed with her daughter’s chastity, telling her that nice girls do not engage in premarital sex and that “a woman doesn’t enjoy these things the way a man does.” What, then, is the maddening desire ripping Deanie apart, causing her to be taken from her home and institutionalized after a complete mental breakdown? At the climax of the film, Deanie finds herself virginal yet nearly insane. “I’m not spoiled! I’m not spoiled!” she tells her mother as she tries to drown herself in the bath, screaming “I hate you!” at the woman who represents all the hypocritical social conventions that prevent her from engaging her raging libido, conventions which have caused her to lose the love of her life to a “bad” girl who seems to be having all the fun.

Young men in the film seem equally confused and adversely affected by abstinence, as her boyfriend Bud starts to lose his mind and collapses on the gym floor from sexual frustration. Bud's family doctor is no help at all, refusing even to discuss the subject of sex with him. Offering to marry Deanie to sanction socially their mounting passion for each other, Bud is counseled by his bombastic and domineering father to go after another kind of girl rather than commit to the socioeconomically inferior Deanie just to find an outlet for his sexual desire. His relationship with Juanita -- whom the filmmakers have conspicuously made nonwhite -- is filled with passion and romance, and the viewer sees no negative consequences for the "bad" girl. In fact, it is Deanie who loses out. After convalescing in a mental institution, she pays a visit to Bud, who has settled into a menial existence as a rancher with a weary, slovenly, pregnant wife and bouncing baby boy. Deanie arrives at his home dressed in virginal white, devoid of emotion except for the fleeting moment when they look into each other's eyes and rekindle the latent passion. They both agree that happiness is too lofty a goal in life.

It is apparent that Deanie and Bud deeply regret their choices and that they are both trapped in situations which at best bring them comfort and security -- hallmarks yet also relics of the 1950s. Clearly, they should have defied convention and indulged their passion. Comfort and security would not be enough for this generation. The viewer is reminded of this as Deanie rides off into the dusty terrain quoting Wordsworth and lamenting her chastity. The film struck a chord with young adults who struggled to make sense of the changing values in American society. If married people could draw on Kinsey and succumb to their desires, why did that not apply to singles? With the availability of the pill in 1960, the main deterrent to premarital sex was for the most part
removed, leaving only the moral issue with which to grapple — and grapple society did.

For the most part, television took a conservative position on its portrayal of the new morality in the early 1960s, aside from presenting a more sexualized feminine ideal. While it reflected the matriarchal makeover embodied in the sexy young wife as seen in Laura Petrie of the *Dick Van Dyke Show* and Morticia Addams of *The Addams Family*, it shied away from the more direct confrontations involving the changing values as seen in Hollywood. However, when television finally decided to take a chance on a single female lead for a show in 1965, it went all out. Indeed, *Honey West* (1965-1966), produced by Aaron Spelling and based on the comic book series by the same name, sticks out like a proverbial sore thumb. Even compared with later shows such as *That Girl* (1966-1971) and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970-1977) Honey is renegade. In fact, *Honey West* looks more at home beside *La Femme Nikita* and *Dark Angel* than it does beside its contemporaries. Honey, played by Anne Francis, careened her way onto the tube in 1965 -- a karate-choping, heart-stopping private detective with a pet ocelot and a leopard bikini. She was a signal of the impending women's liberation movement, even before the creation of NOW or the emergence of radical feminism. In true Barbie fashion, she had a Ken-like side kick named Sam who was equally plastic and bland. Curiously, the wildness of Honey's character was tempered by the fact that she lived with her Aunt Meg, a classy yet prim middle-aged woman. Aunt Meg constantly tried to get Honey married off to some nice man, preferably Sam, but Honey would have no part of it. Honey called all the shots: solving the mysteries, running the agency, and resisting his advances. She epitomized the quintessential "dangerously sensual" woman:
It is less a surprise that the show was killed inside of a year, than that it was produced at all.

The first episode, "The Swingin' Mrs. Jones," set the tone for the show. Honey is hired by an older married woman who is being blackmailed by a young gigolo. He had pretended to be her lover only to take photographs and use them against her. Honey and Sam go undercover to a swanky resort hotel where the woman had met the blackmailer, and Honey attempts to elicit a seduction and entrap the perpetrator. Equipped with smoke bomb earrings, a hidden walkie-talkie in a drink stirrer, and a skimpy leopard bathing suit, she sits like a spider in a web waiting for her prey. She is approached and it seems as if her plan will work, until it is foiled when someone recognizes her as a private eye. The blackmailer, who is also a murderer, is working in tandem with his mother and they set a trap for Honey. She is almost trapped until her smoke-bomb earrings come to the rescue. With minimal help from Sam, the two are arrested. The show ends with Honey and Sam sparring in a friendly karate match, and Honey kicks his butt. Afterwards, Aunt Meg remarks to Honey that "you have to let the man win once in a while." In her characteristically flip, sarcastic manner, Honey replies, "you're looking at one sore loser!" They both have a hardy laugh.

The theme of Honey solving the mystery runs throughout the show, as does the appearance of female criminals. In "Invitation to Limbo," she discovers that people are being hypnotized to steal company secrets and that the ring is being operated by a secretary. In the final episode aired in September 1965, NBC. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
1966, “The Abominable Snowman,” Honey uncovers the fact that heroin is being smuggled into the country inside “snow-filled” paper weights. During the course of these episodes, she is revealed as a strong and powerful woman. In the former episode, when her sports car is blown up and her aunt suggests she get out of the business, Honey dismisses the idea. She states that she does not want police protection and that the private eye business suits her. In the latter episode, Sam complains that he does not have enough say in the firm’s affairs, so Honey tells Sam, “get off your male ego! You were just a junior partner in this firm when my father was around.” Meg tries to intervene in a fight between Honey and Sam, still trying to play matchmaker. “You’d make a nice couple,” she offers, and then counsels Honey on the fact that she may get further by being nice rather than aggressive. To appease Sam and end the argument, Honey throws Sam a line -- “You look very handsome today” -- and that effectively ends his rage.

Honey’s character and the series in general suggested that women in America in 1965 were changing. As Julie D’Acci explained in her essay on the series, ABC looked to capitalize on the growing baby boom market, the singles culture, and male as well as female fantasy. As D’Acci detailed, over time the sponsors came to realize that women were their primary target audience and advertising followed suit. Earlier shows included commercials targeted to men, but later ones were only targeted to women. Her essay posits the idea that men were intimidated by Honey and her “dangerously sensual” power, although the network made sure to keep her looking appropriately feminine.

203 “The Abominable Snowman,” Honey West, Final episode, 2 September 1966, NBC. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
205 D’Acci, 80-81.
This is not to say that the network killed the series because it was threatening to men -- ABC was the underdog and aggressively pursued profits regardless of social mores. D’Acci noted that the show was not delivering ratings, partly because the Nielsen samples were outdated and did not reflect the tastes of the young, urban single woman and partly because the fantasy genre and the sitcom attracted larger audiences in the mid-1960s. One of the most enlightening aspects of D’Acci’s essay is the fact that when she first presented her paper at a Society for Cinema Studies Conference in 1992, a large number of women who came of viewing age in 1965 remembered the series and considered Honey a “powerful heroine.” At the time, ABC had no way of knowing that, since Nielsen ratings were based on outmoded samples of a disproportionate number of rural and suburban married people rather than young, urban singles. The viewing habits of frustrated housewives trapped at home were measured, and this translated into a preponderance of dashing heroes rather than heroines on the tube. Additionally, fewer teens and singles watched television compared to their domestic suburban counterparts. Thus, when ABC decided to take another stab at capturing the growing singles market with That Girl in 1966 -- at which time the Nielsen samples had been adjusted -- they settled on a much more subdued and socially acceptable single girl prototype rather than take a chance on a renegade like Honey.

The network’s failure to tap into the popularity of Honey West among college students indicated the overall lack of awareness among middle Americans about the radicalization of young American women, or about the mounting dissent in American society in general. A burgeoning spirit of rebellion

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206 D'Acci, 80.
207 Gerard Jones, 150.
208 D'Acci, 86-87.
lurked beneath the surface in American society, and television programs provided a cultural forum to express this energy. In the mid-1960s, hoping to capitalize on the trend toward fantasy programs which started with *The Addams Family* (1964-1965) and *Bewitched* (1964-1972), NBC launched *I Dream of Jeannie* (1965-1970). The series, which enjoyed a five-year run in prime time, featured an astronaut, Tony Nelson, who unwittingly frees a beautiful genie -- named Jeannie -- when his botched space mission strands him on a desert island. The magical Jeannie eventually helps him return safely home and invites herself along in the process. Most of the episodes focused on the antics of the smitten Jeannie, who is continually trying to win the love of her "master."

Gerard Jones dismissed *I Dream of Jeannie* as a "male sex fantasy," and Susan Douglas interpreted the show as antifeminist compared to its competitor, *Bewitched* (1964-1972). However, Jeannie actually posed a much more serious threat to cold war masculinity than did Samantha, the domesticated witch on *Bewitched*. Jeannie is the ultimate dangerously sensual woman; her power simply cannot be contained. Her wrath is not tempered by domestic propriety, and she uses her powers -- sexual and magical -- with impunity to get what she wants. Jeannie has the power to derail the entire space program, a bastion of masculinity during the cold war, with a simple blink of her eyes. Unlike other magical women on television, she possesses a willingness to use her power.

In the first episode, "The Lady in the Bottle," a stranded Tony finds the bottle, frees Jeannie from centuries of captivity, and earns her unwavering gratitude. When she grants Tony his wish -- to be rescued -- he frees her. However, Jeannie insists she is in love with him and does not want to leave him.

209 Gerard Jones, 180.
The emancipated and determined Jeannie sneaks into his duffle bag and accompanies him back to NASA headquarters. Jeannie takes control of the situation from the first episode. She is not, in actuality, his captive, because Tony has freed her. Rather, Tony becomes a pawn of Jeannie's unpredictable behavior. Upon their return home, Jeannie proceeds to wreak havoc on his life. She is always the sexual aggressor, tempting the rather coy Tony with her blatant sensuality. Dressed in a sexy harem outfit which exposed her midriff, she is often seen making sexual advances toward Tony. Her first mission is to get rid of Melissa Stone, the woman who Tony plans to marry. She also happens to be the daughter of General Stone, Tony's boss. When Melissa comes calling, Jeannie struts into the room dressed only in Tony's white-collar, button-down shirt. Tony is upset but powerless to take action; all Jeannie needs to do is blink in order to get her way. During the course of the first season, Jeannie succeeds in undermining Tony and Melissa's relationship and breaking off the engagement, freeing him from domestic containment.

In the second episode, "My Hero?" Jeannie demonstrates her power by blinking an unwitting Tony to her home town in ancient Persia to participate in a contest for her hand in marriage.\(^{212}\) When Tony refuses, he is sentenced to death by her father. However, while in jail, Tony defends her honor against her ex-boyfriend -- the jilted, bitter, and powerful Ali. Jeannie is so grateful, she saves Tony by blinking him back to Florida. It is apparent that Jeannie holds all the cards and Tony is at her mercy. Many episodes follow the same formula: Tony refuses to comply with one of Jeannie's requests, Jeannie blinks him into some life-threatening situation, and Jeannie rescues him from a horrible fate just in time. By the end of the series' run in the 1969 and 1970 season, Jeannie had won

\(^{212}\) "My Hero" *I Dream of Jeannie*, dir. Sidney Sheldon, 25 September 1965, NBC. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
Tony's heart and the two married. Using her powers of persuasion, Jeannie achieved her objectives. Her assertiveness and willingness to use power to realize her goals reflected the growing spirit of activism among America's young women, especially those who involved themselves in the civil rights movement.

Over the course of the early 1960s, television news increasingly presented images at odds with the cultural mythology network shows presented. For example, the civil rights movement and early sit-ins were juxtaposed to happy sitcom households and advertisements for the good life. This disparity became evident to college students, and half of them were female. As Douglas pointed out, in the early 1960s women in particular found empowerment in the folk music of singers like Joan Baez and Mary Travers who dared to take on controversial political topics and dismiss the accoutrements of femininity like make-up and fashionable clothing. She also noted that they were naturally beautiful women who could get away with this. Marketing experts quickly capitalized on the "natural look" by offering women a host of products designed to help them obtain the fresh new hippie girl look -- products like Love's Baby Soft and Skinny Dip cologne co-opted the natural look into the sexual sell.

In addition to receiving empowering and contradictory messages about female power from the popular culture, the younger generation of women experienced mounting dissatisfaction with their roles in American society through participation in the civil rights movement and the rising tide of student activism. Organizations like SDS and its urban outreach program, the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) in the North, and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the South gave women the training they

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213 "The Wedding" I Dream of Jeannie, dir. Sidney Sheldon, 2 December 1969, NBC. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.

214 Douglas, 139-153.
needed to organize grass roots resistance movements. As Sara Evans noted in *Personal Politics*, organizations like NOW, which were comprised mostly of older generation professional women, held little appeal for these younger women. Like their male counterparts, they grew apart from their elders due to a generation gap that grew wider over the decade. Those women of the older generation looked for equality in the public sphere, but they did not question the system in its entirety. They accepted the division between public and private lives, and they never really addressed the division of labor within the private sphere or the socially constructed nature of gender in general.²¹⁵

Sara Evans demonstrated that the roots of the women’s liberation movement stemmed in large measure from single women’s participation in the southern civil rights moment. From the movement's early days, southern white women were forced to question gender definitions and the ideology of the southern lady if they were to confront racism and challenge the status quo in the South.²¹⁶ Young black women in the South proved instrumental in the formation and fruition of SNCC, working side by side with their black male counterparts. Initially, many black women felt reluctant to form sexual or romantic relationships with men in the organization for fear that this would complicate matters. They needed to be tough and diligent, not weak and vulnerable.²¹⁷ Women of both races in many 1960s movements struggled with the issues of sexism and the sexual revolution inside their organizations. Although the sexual revolution called into question the mores and values of postwar America regarding sexuality, traditional notions of gender still permeated the cultural landscape, and with the rejection of old standards came

²¹⁷ Evans, 83-84.
ambivalence and confusion about sex and gender roles among the younger generation.

The reluctance of black women to become sexually involved with their male SNCC counterparts was compromised when young middle-class college girls from the North descended on the South in greater and greater numbers between 1963 and 1965. As Evans demonstrated, the liberal white middle and upper middle-class women from northern universities came to the South with a burning desire to put their idealism about race relations and integration into action. During the freedom summer of 1964 in particular, white women started having sexual relations with black men in greater numbers. This trend was indicative of the overall rise in premarital sex among college age students in major universities in general, but was fueled by other factors. In some instances, white women who were not seen as particularly attractive by the standards of the day -- too plain, to ethnic, too heavy -- discovered that black men were very attracted to them. Other white women felt it a sort of right of passage to sleep with a black man, to break the long-standing cultural taboo and deliver the ultimate slap in the face to racism. White women also felt they might be perceived as racist if they rejected the sexual advances of black men. White women were increasingly seen as loose and eager for sex. Black men began to brag about their conquests of white women, and liberation gave way in many instances to exploitation on the one hand, or to preferential treatment on the other if a woman became associated with a powerful man. This trend created a rift between white and black women in the movement. Given the availability and willingness of white women, black men did not have a need for serious relationships with black women. Black women felt marginalized in their own organization and resentment developed. Such sentiments, along with the
general feeling that white college students were taking over SNCC, would fragment the organization. Eventually, class and racial tensions resulted in the overall alienation and eventual expulsion of whites from SNCC.\textsuperscript{218}

Black women in SNCC were the first to call attention to the issue of gender inequality inside the protest organizations. The same paradox seemed to affect many organizations: the youth of America sought to change the world through radical, new grassroots organizations such as SNCC and SDS, yet the same old gender stereotypes persisted. Women were relegated to clerical or domestic tasks and not afforded the respect they deserved. After a day of demonstrating or organizing, men expected women to perform the household chores. Sexual promiscuity as the sexual revolution wore on further complicated the picture. Several strong black women within SNCC addressed the issue of sexism in the organization, but white women felt reluctant to challenge men openly in the organization. Black women began to resent white women, angry at the reality of American society defining femininity and attractiveness by white standards and feeling alienated by that fact, even within their own organization. Evans contended that northern white women, when they eventually left the South, took with them a renewed sense of activism and feminism inspired by their black sisters.\textsuperscript{219}

Up north, women in SDS and the New Left confronted an even larger problem. SDS, controlled as it was by male intellectuals, proved even more difficult for women. ERAP, its grassroots outreach program, provided an opportunity for women to get more involved in the pavement-pounding aspects of the movement. Regardless, by early 1965, they had started to experience the same consequences of the sexual revolution as women within SNCC. Women

\textsuperscript{218} Evans, "Going South," in \textit{Personal Politics} 60-82.

who slept with powerful men moved up faster and those who abstained or insisted on monogamous relationships were increasingly marginalized. As countercultural values grew, ideals of fidelity, love, and dependence appeared outmoded.\textsuperscript{220} However, even if women adopted the more promiscuous attitudes of their male counterparts, they continued to be relegated to menial positions in the organization. In terms of their gender, they were still expected to be subordinate. By 1965, the women of SDS felt ready to insist on a discussion of the "woman question" at the December 1965 SDS conference.\textsuperscript{221}

Black and white women alike, however, learned a powerful lesson in the early to mid 1960s. However brave and motivated they were to change the world, their physical appearance and their gender still dictated their lives. Women of both races felt ambivalence about notions of womanhood which stemmed from the sexual revolution and an increasing fixation on a sexy, attractive appearance as defined by the standards of the day. The sisterhood of black and white women was compromised and the solidarity of the women's liberation movement shattered as young women adopted and responded to the new mores of the sexual revolution. As they challenged the status quo on the political front, their culture and society still bombarded them with messages that preyed on their insecurities and imperfections, judging them against prevailing cultural norms of female beauty. Men within SNCC and other organizations also imbibed this confusion, in many instances benefiting from the plethora of available women but likely also being confounded by the changing value system. For example, it became a black male rite of passage to sleep with many white women, and the peer pressure to adopt these new values was ever

\textsuperscript{220} Evans, 152-154
\textsuperscript{221} Evans, 155.
present. The combination of idealism, youthful rebellion, genuine outrage at the intransigence of massive resistance, and the complications of the sexual revolution turned a well-meaning interracial, intergender experiment into a racially and sexually fragmented quagmire by the mid-1960s.

By the late 1960s, the emergence of the counterculture and radical feminism turned traditional notions of gender roles upside down, but at the same time fomented a growing backlash in American society. The more traditional goals of feminism would be overshadowed in the media by the sexier and more sensational aspects of the women’s liberation movement, as the ideology of feminism and the New Left merged with the sexual revolution in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The “dangerously sensual” female identity would, however, endure.

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222 Evans, 80-82.
In 1967, the *Ladies' Home Journal* proudly proclaimed in a story headline, "The Battle of the Sexes is Over. Who Won? We Did." The article went on to report that women in America were not only equal to men, they were better off than men. They could choose between career and family, or have both. The article stated that for this new woman, job opportunities "are better than ever" and "there is no possibility of ever ejecting her from the working force again." It went on to report that women in America, in fact, enjoyed the best of all possible worlds. They actually had more choices available to them than men. They could choose to marry or not marry, marry earlier or later in life, work or stay home and raise a family. No longer hemmed in by economic subservience or cultural mandates, women were free to live life according to their own terms. The article predicted a jubilant future, one in which employers would accommodate the rising aspirations of women who chose both career and family by providing flexible working hours and day care centers for children. It assumed that the American populace in general would experience a decline in working hours and an increase in leisure time -- a veritable utopia compared to America's nemesis, the Soviet Union.

Recounting the opinions of various experts in the medical profession, the article touted the inherent biological superiority of women. They were living longer, had stronger constitutions, weathered change more efficiently, and were generally responsible for the furthering of American civilization as a
consequence of their femininity. Foreshadowing the backlash against the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and the goals of radical feminism, *Ladies' Home Journal* featured the opinion of an expert anthropologist who praised the inherent differences between men and women and expressed concern about the notion of gender equality:

Dr. Montagu warned that women will cease to be equipped for the future if they continue “migrating toward that ultimate destiny of complete equality,” and embrace masculine values. “Masculine intelligence may succeed in exterminating the human species,” he said. “The only kind of intelligence that will succeed in saving it is the kind with which women are endowed, and that is the ability to love, to laugh, to civilized.”226

This ode to femininity on the eve of the eruption of radical feminism and the women’s liberation movement highlighted a widening generation gap that would split American society along yet another line. The younger generation, spurred on by a growing disdain for America’s cold war foreign policy, attempted to blur gender boundaries through fashion, music, and an attack on convention. Traditionalists fought back, contending that differences between the sexes were hallmarks of American society. They found an unlikely ally in Hugh Hefner and the sex industry in general: both were happy to exploit and champion the increasingly liberal morality of Americans regarding sexual mores and values, and both were eager to commodify female sexuality. Liberals and conservatives alike felt threatened, however, when the women’s liberation movement sought to reclaim female sexuality from the male domain and, in some cases, repackage it with a more radical and virulent strain of feminism. As Hefner put it, “I’m all in favor of women being able to vote and all that, but I

want them to be attractive to men. The militant feminists really want to be men, and I don’t want to live in a society with no man-woman differences.”

By the early 1970s, the radical elements of the feminist movement challenged the very construct of gender. Marxist rhetoric from the New Left regarding class warfare was applied to male-female relationships, with men as the oppressors and women as the oppressed. The personal, these women asserted, was political, a sentiment articulated by Kate Millet in her controversial study Sexual Politics: A Surprising Examination of Society’s Most Arbitrary Folly, published in 1970. Much like the black power movement expelling whites from its ranks, some women felt the need to articulate their dissatisfaction and brainstorm solutions among only themselves. Some of this was accomplished through consciousness-raising sessions where women got together to share their common experiences. As Susan Douglas argued the American media reacted in two ways to the women’s liberation movement. In some instances, sisterhood became synonymous with man-hating as the media demonized the combative elements of the movement, hastening a backlash that was already in motion. At the same time, the media trivialized women’s liberation as a bra-burning bimbo-fest -- titillating yet benign -- starting with the 1968 Miss America Pageant protest in which women threw their undergarments into “freedom trash cans” and crowned a sheep Miss America. This often resulted in a patronizing attitude toward women who, it seemed to some, were merely being swept along in the fashion of the moment, which just happened to be radicalism and identity politics. For a society growing weary of radicalism and “movement” rhetoric

229 Douglas, 139-161.
in general, this latest revolution proved to be too much. In the same way that John Adams scoffed at his wife Abigail when she urged him to “remember the ladies” on the eve of American independence, American society “could not but laugh” at these trivial demands in the face of the wider concerns of the civil rights movement and protests against America's cold war foreign policy.

The changing attitudes of the young, however, also signified a growing frustration with America's cold war foreign policy. Increasingly, New Left liberals and young radicals in the antiwar and civil rights movements sympathized with oppressed peoples in the developing world, recognizing the appeal communism had for the poor. Moreover, communism supported the notion of gender as well as class equality, and it became a fashionable ideology among the young. They perceived America's foreign policy as imperialistic and hypocritical. Odes to patriotism, the notion of the nuclear family with the mother at home, and strict maintenance of gender roles as a defining feature of American life would not work to quell the quest for gender equality and keep women in the home as it had in the 1950s. Too many people were tired of the war in Vietnam and failed to see communism as the monolithic enemy it had once appeared to be in the early cold war years. Sex appeal, however, remained of paramount importance to most women into the mid-1960s. Thus, when the radical fringes of the feminist movement became associated with lesbianism, man-hating, revolutionary politics, and androgyny, many women tried to distance themselves from the women's liberation movement and the feminist label, in the process compromising the more mainstream elements of the women's rights movement. The sexual liberation of women and the sexualization of femininity, however, endured. Women learned to use their sexuality as a power tool, forging a dangerously sensual compromise.
In addition to challenging gender norms, the younger generation, led by those in what came to be called the counterculture, also rejected the institutions of marriage and family. They advocated "free love" and communal lifestyles. New attitudes about sex among America's youth dovetailed nicely with mainstream America's ongoing sexual revolution and had an appeal beyond its esoteric base. Consequently, between the mid-1960s and the late 1960s, the lines between married and single life blurred. By the early 1970s, monogamy and love could just as easily be a prominent feature of single life, and sexual experimentation outside of a relationship could likewise be an integral part of marriage. Two forces propelled the sexualization of American culture. One was the consumer-driven, mainstream sexual revolution which began in the mid-1950s with the publication of the Kinsey report and the launch of Playboy. Characterized by materialism and affluence, it was an integral part of the culture of consumption in the 1950s and 1960s. The other force forging the rapid change in values was the "free love" concept of the baby boom generation, which embraced sexual freedom but rejected materialism. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the two forces converged, to take a toll on Americans' mores and values and to redefine the parameters for married and single lifestyles. America's media disseminated countercultural values to mainstream Americans, with advertising taking the lead. In his study of advertising in the 1950s and 1960s, Thomas Frank demonstrated that the "creative revolution" in advertising which began in 1959 had reshaped the industry by the mid-1960s. Frank observed that "What distinguished the advertising of the 1960s was its acknowledgment of and even sympathy with the mass society critique."230 This shift had a great

impact on the values of mainstream Americans, which included an acceptance of a more blatantly sexual cultural landscape.

Married people in their thirties and forties who had followed society’s previous mandates to marry young and start families could not fully embrace the new freedom of the counterculture and its peculiar brand of sexual liberation. However, they had been steeped in messages about the importance of sexual fulfillment for decades, making aspects of the new sexual liberation enticing. Their appetites were whet by an increasingly risqué American popular culture, led by the film industry but also influencing theater and television. Competition from television helped force a more openly sexual and brash element in American films -- people went to the movies to see what they could not see on television. Films became more openly sexual, showed more skin, and used more explicit language. In 1970, Richard Schickel, movie reviewer for the rather mainstream *Life* magazine, reported that he regarded the increasing use of profanity in films as a positive trend and one that was "far more important than the longer-term, much-discussed movement toward greater nudity and more detailed and realistic depictions of the sex act."\(^{231}\) Schinkel reasoned that while nudity in film was being overused in some instances when it did not necessarily enhance the viewer’s understanding of a character, raw language in most cases did result in a more authentic experience for the viewer. He sighted *M*A*S*H* (1970) as an example of a film which benefited from using language which was likely more true to its war-torn setting.\(^{232}\) American values were further thrown into flux by advice literature which advocated sexual experimentation even within marriage. By the 1970s, married couples could be swingers, singles could be monogamous cohabitators, and all this could be accomplished under the


\(^{232}\) Schickel, 12.
accomplished under the banner of respectability. This transition spurred on the New Right, the Moral Majority, and family values activists who sought to turn back the gains of the feminist movement and curtail the influence of New Left radicals.

Regardless of the family values crusades, by the 1980s, the demographics of American society revealed the profound changes spurred by the counterculture, the sexual revolution, and feminism. Married couples were affected both by the social upheaval of the movement and by the choices afforded women through the gains of feminism. Divorce rates doubled between 1960 and 1980, and by the early 1980s almost half of all marriages ended in divorce. Despite the efforts of the pro-family contingency and the Moral Majority, America's institutions changed. More Americans stayed single longer, chose to marry later, or chose not to marry at all. By 1980, fifty percent of people aged twenty to twenty-four remained unmarried, compared with twenty-eight percent in 1960.\(^\text{233}\) Between the early 1960s and the 1980s, the number of cohabitating couples quadrupled. The number of American women choosing to remain virginal until marriage went from fifty percent in 1960 to twenty percent by the late 1980s.\(^\text{234}\) All of these trends had been set in motion by the mid-1960s, fueled in part by a growing opposition to America's cold war policy in Vietnam which resulted in a wider assault on all mainstream American values. Also inspired by the sexual revolution, a new set of American values were being renegotiated in the pages of women's magazines, in advice literature, in film, and on television.

Radical feminism, the women's liberation movement, and radical lesbian-feminism further threatened the status quo. In the eyes of the public, the radical

\(^{233}\) Woloch, 530
\(^{234}\) Mintz and Kellogg, 204.
elements of feminism blended together with the wider women's liberation movement, which incorporated elements of mainstream feminism with the direct action techniques of the New Left — skills women honed in the antiwar and civil rights movements. In February 1970, for example, a group of women's liberationists "occupied" the offices of the *Ladies' Home Journal* and staged a sit-in. The liberationists demanded, among other reasonable requests, that the male editor step down and hand over the magazine to "the movement." The editor declined, but did agree to give them an eight-page spread in the August 1970 issue of the magazine in order to express their point of view.\(^{235}\)

On the issue of sex, the women's liberation movement fragmented. Some championed the personal freedom of the sexual revolution and embraced the new, liberated morality. Others rallied against what they believed to be male-dominated notions of female sexuality, the objectification of women, and the burgeoning pornography business. More radical activists attacked sex and childbearing as instruments of patriarchy and advocated lesbianism or abstinence. Ironically, the attack on female sexual objectification by the women's liberation movement, especially given the way it was presented in the media, made the sexual revolution and its sexualized depictions of femininity more acceptable to conservatives. This helped to foster the general shift to a more sexualized feminine ideal.

The women's liberation movement belonged to the larger assault on postwar conformity, and the movement became a victim of the inevitable backlash against the radicalization of American society in the 1960s and early 1970s. Like other movements, it was promulgated by a new generation whose youthful energy had been galvanized by the myth of Camelot and then

shattered by unfulfilled promises in the wake of John F. Kennedy's assassination. Younger women, like their male counterparts, would not be content to accept the constraints imposed by a generation they perceived as out of touch with their reality. By the late 1960s, the nation split along many different lines, with gender being just one more variable in this divisiveness. The nonviolent, southern-based interracial coalition of the civil rights movement of the early 1960s gave way to splinter groups willing to use force to attain their goals, from the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense founded in 1966 to the quasiterrorist Symbionese Liberation Army of the early 1970s. The altruism of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) as articulated in the Port Huron Statement of 1962 gave way to the militant Weathermen of the late 1960s, rife with Marxist rhetoric and terroristic undertones. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), once a Christian-based and interracial youth movement, expelled whites and championed the rhetoric of the black power movement. The counterculture and its free love ethos challenged the very foundation of American society by attacking institutions such as marriage, family, schools, corporate America, and the military-industrial complex. All of these movements had their roots in a disdain for America's cold war foreign policy, particularly in a mounting opposition to the Vietnam War.

In this climate of wrenching social change, the women's rights movement of the early 1960s, with its moderate goals of equal opportunity for women, federally-funded day care, equal pay for equal work, and reproductive choice, was overshadowed by the more militant and sensational aspects of the women's liberation movement and radical feminism. The general climate of radicalism in the late 1960s spurred on a virulent backlash against the political Left which curtailed and contained the women's movement yet unwittingly championed a
more sexualized notion of American womanhood. A highly sexualized feminine prototype was being constructed regardless of political affiliations. That sensual ideal survived into the coming decades, made more acceptable to conservatives when juxtaposed to the antifeminine assaults on American womanhood promulgated by a small but vocal minority of activists.

The New Right triumphed in 1968, but traced its origins to the early 1950s and anti-communist hysteria. Women played an integral part in the movement from the beginning. Republican women, mostly based in southern California, proved instrumental in helping root out “subversives” during the McCarthy era. They championed the role of women in the home and served as model citizens fighting a battle against communism on the American home front. These “kitchen table activists,” effective at the grass roots level, influenced school board decisions and kept “radical” rhetoric out of the school curriculum, foreshadowing what was to come in the ERA debate, in the conflicted sentiments of America’s women regarding feminism, and in the backlash of the 1970s and 1980s.236 The New Right, in its nascency in the early 1960s save for the Republican Presidential nomination of Barry Goldwater in 1964, emerged as a powerful political force with the election of President Richard M. Nixon in 1968. American politics took a hard right turn during and after the “rebellious” Sixties, the next decades punctuated by only four years of Democratic leadership under President Jimmy Carter after the disgrace of Richard Nixon’s administration. In 1980, President Ronald Reagan captured the presidency with the support of an increasingly vocal Moral Majority, which sought to undermine the liberal trends of the 1960s and early 1970s by bringing back school prayer, overturning Roe v. Wade, and campaigning against gay rights.

The women’s liberation movement had a multifaceted impact on American society. Radical feminists forced American society to take women seriously and made the more moderate goals of the movement, such as equal pay for equal work, seem reasonable. Indeed, the feminist movement is considered one of the most successful movements of the postwar era. Congress passed the ERA in 1972, and although it was never ratified, women were afforded some measure of protection through the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The right to reproductive choice was secured with *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. On the other hand, the radical feminist movement fomented a backlash among some conservatives that sought to demonize militant feminists and obliterate their influence, in the process threatening even the more moderate goals of feminism like federally funded day care and ratification of the ERA. Indeed, anti-ERA activists would argue that the status quo without the ERA provided the best of all worlds for women, giving them many of the benefits of equality without the pitfalls, echoing sentiments much like those expressed in the 1967 *Ladies’ Home Journal* article. Women would not lose the right to avoid the draft or be supported by a husband after a divorce.

In addition to the attacks from antifeminist New Right activists like Phyllis Schlafly, feminist icons like Betty Friedan also grew critical of those they considered fringe elements of the women’s liberation movement, claiming that the radicals doomed the mainstream feminist movement. In “Beyond Women’s Liberation,” Friedan feared that extremist “female chauvinist boors” were taking sisterhood too far and actually replicating the male behavior they found so reprehensible. In “We Don’t Have To Be That Independent,” she talked about the difficulties involved in trying to balance career and family, and warned

needed to be contained and ultimately destroyed. What would survive was a "dangerously sensual" compromise: a highly sexualized liberated woman who was at once empowered and objectified, epitomized by the scantily clad, braless, yet potentially lethal private eyes of the blockbuster television show of the mid-1970s, Charlie's Angels. Fully adhering to Playboy-prescribed notions of female sexuality yet imbued with an assertiveness and spunky attitude reminiscent of the movement, they could succeed at men's jobs in a man's world by capitalizing on their sexual power and using their inherent biological differences against their enemies, most of whom were men. Perhaps the only element of the androgynous, gender-blending movement of the mid-1960s that survived the backlash was an increasingly thinner feminine ideal, resulting in the rise of anorexia and bulimia among women and girls in the decades that followed.

From the mid-1960s to the late 1970s, American society sought to absorb a rapidly changing set of values, and this process of negotiation played out in American popular culture. On television, in film, and in print, Americans wrestled with the new morality, women's liberation, and the sexual revolution. In Chapter Four, "Flying High in the Age of Aquarius: Radical Feminism, Free Love, and the Sexual Revolution," I trace the rise of radical feminism along with the fruition of the sexual revolution and show how these movements sometimes dovetailed and sometimes conflicted with one another, in the process sending contrary messages about female identity. I chronicle the rise of the women's liberation movement and analyze its absorption into American society. I also examine its treatment in the popular culture. Television shows such as That Girl (1966-1971) illuminated the expanding singles culture, while films such as Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice (1969) displayed the profound influence of the new morality on mainstream American families. Novels such as Erica Jong's 1973
blockbuster *Fear of Flying* celebrated the new, liberated woman. In Chapter Five: "From Feminist to *Femme Fatale*: Backlash, Compromise, and the Sexual Save," I examine the backlash against the women's liberation movement and the rise of the New Right, the roots of which I locate in the mid to late 1960s, complicating notions of the 1960s as an era of liberalism. As many scholars have started to acknowledge, the rise of conservatism was a defining feature of postwar America and one that has until recently received relatively scant treatment.239 The radicalization of America's young women, the assault on the American family, and the sexual revolution served to strengthen the resolve of traditionalists and further the resurgence of political and social conservatism, a trend already evident in the mid-1960s. I show how the culture reflected the backlash, even as it sought to incorporate these changes and ultimately help to negotiate the dangerously sensual compromise. Judith Rossner's 1975 novel *Looking For Mr. Goodbar* raised awareness about the deadly dangers of sexual liberation, and films like the 1979 hit *Kramer vs. Kramer* depicted the traumatic impact of women's liberation on family life. American society and culture settled on new feminine constructs which incorporated some of the goals of the women's liberation movement and the sexual revolution but in a less threatening and more pleasant package. Prototypes for this "compromised" woman could be found in the submissive yet independent Mary Richards of the *Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970-1977) or the perky, prancing, pistol-weilding detectives of *Charlie's Angels* (1976-1981).

Women were once again caught in the crossfire of wider issues in

Women were once again caught in the crossfire of wider issues in American society, the rise of conservatism and the backlash against the radicalism and antiestablishment rhetoric of the 1960s. The media’s treatment of the radical elements of the antiwar and civil rights movements contributed to this shift to the right, and its coverage of the women’s liberation movement was no exception. Just as the cold war served to heighten the importance of the nuclear family as a defining feature of American democracy, thus fostering domestic containment and undermining the socioeconomic gains of women in the 1940s, the dissent over America’s cold war policy in Vietnam in the late 1960s and the polarization of society which ensued served to undermine the moderate goals of feminism and fostered a backlash against women’s equality. This resulted in the construction of a highly sexualized yet powerful feminine ideal which would survive the backlash because it was formed as a compromise between the powerful, radical, yet androgynous feminist and the sexual yet submissive playboy pet.

This dangerously sensual compromise was a necessary yet troublesome byproduct of the backlash against the women’s liberation movement and America’s shift to the right. It allowed a more assertive and empowered female identity to live into the 1980s and beyond, and it gave women a way profit from their femininity and sexuality. It also started women on the path to embracing and celebrating their femininity rather than emulating masculinity in order to succeed in the public sphere. The construct, however, also trivialized the feminist movement, furthered the cheapening, objectification, and commodification of female sexuality, and disseminated virtually unattainable standards of beauty as cultural norms for American women, pitting women against one another. As one women’s liberationist articulated in “How Appearance Divides Women,”
part of the eight-page ode to the movement forced upon the *Ladies Home Journal*:

As a young girl, I was so overwhelmed by the beauty standard that I was amazed by all the women who didn't fit it yet managed to find a husband. We all worry about being considered too fat or too thin, too small-breasted or too large-breasted, too tall or too short, too pale or too dark. We all feel the pressure to spend a lot of time on our appearance. I go to the store for a bottle of milk and I have to “fix myself up” before I go. I’m not even secure in my own apartment.240

This sort of confessional from a card-carrying militant feminist who was brazen enough to “occupy” the offices of a leading women’s magazine -- and effective enough to get her demands met -- serves as testament to the conflicting feelings of American women during the height of the women’s movement. Feminism may have made great gains toward equal opportunity for women in the public sphere, but the battle against impossible standards of beauty continued to rage.

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CHAPTER FOUR
Flying High in the Age of Aquarius:
Radical Feminism, Free Love, and the Sexual Revolution

Don’t get me wrong, it’s not that I’m knockin’ it
It’s just that I am not in the market
for a boy who wants to love only me
Yes and I ain’t saying you ain’t pretty
All I’m saying’ is I’m not ready
for any person, place or thing tryin to pull the reins in on me

By the mid-1960s, the American family and the institution of marriage faced serious challenges from the sexual revolution, feminism, and the new morality of the times. Gender roles were reconstructed and a new morality for Americans was negotiated in the pages of popular magazines, self-help books, on television, in films, and in novels. In 1966, Jacqueline Susann’s novel Valley of the Dolls became the number one bestseller of the year and went on to set the record as the fastest-selling book in publishing history. It was a groundbreaking, steamy, frankly sexual novel which paved the way for many others like it, and its contents encapsulated new female American attitudes toward marriage, love, sex, and family at mid-decade.

The novel centers on the lives of three women: Anne Welles, Jennifer North, and Neely O’Hara. All three move to New York City as young women, hoping to make it on their own in the entertainment business. Virginal Anne, a New England blue-blood, longs to escape the confines of her small town wealth and Puritanical upbringing. Jennifer, raised by a poor single mother, hopes to use her dazzling looks to break into modeling and rescue her family from poverty. Neely, the youngest of the three and a talented singer, hopes to move beyond Vaudeville onto Broadway.

All three women eventually find success in the public sphere. Anne becomes a print and television advertising model, Neely moves beyond Broadway to Hollywood stardom, and Jennifer makes her mark as an international film star. Their personal lives, however, are fraught with pain and trauma. All three, even the reluctant Anne, eventually descend into the “valley of the dolls,” dolls being prescription sedatives. Each eventually ameliorates her personal suffering with a combination of alcohol, barbiturates, and diet pills. Jennifer is the first casualty -- she commits suicide when she learns she has breast cancer and will need a mastectomy, so dependent is she on her perfect body for validation.243 As if to confirm the antifeminists’ worst nightmare, Neely leaves a husband and twins to pursue her career, becoming more intolerable as she becomes more successful. She is eventually confined to a mental institution for her addiction and subsequently rescued by her only true friend, Anne. Fat and sober, she makes a comeback through the help of Anne and Anne’s husband, Lyon Burke.244

Anne, meanwhile, had found happiness in her mid-thirties by marrying her one true love, Lyon, to whom she had lost her virginity as a young woman. Lyon helps Neely get back to the top as her manager, and eventually Neely betrays Anne by having an affair with him. Lyon eventually cuts Neely loose, he and Anne try to repair the damage to their marriage, but he eventually takes up with another rising starlet. Because of his infidelity, Anne too seeks comfort in in the “valley of the dolls.”245

The contents of the novel and its various subplots revealed a culture conflicted over the issues of sexuality, marriage, family, and career for women.

243 Susann, 310-337.
244 Susann, 338-408
245 Susann, 390-442.
Echoing Betty Friedan's and Helen Gurley Brown's sentiments, each female protagonist chose to avoid marriage and family at an early age and make her own mark on the world. Anne, in fact, gave up a chance to marry a millionaire she did not love and to instead work as a secretary at a talent agency and support herself. Like Allison MacKenzie in *Peyton Place* (1957) a decade earlier, Anne longed for the excitement and anonymity of city life, willing to risk small-town security for adventure and independence. However, Anne's very success sowed the seeds of her demise. Becoming independently wealthy made her too intimidating and threatening to men. As a younger woman, she had lost Lyon, her only true love, because of her refusal to leave New York and stay by his side while he wrote his first novel. Later, she secretly lent money to her old boss, Henry, in order to secure Lyon a share of Henry's talent agency and get Lyon interested in a more stable career in New York. Lyon's affairs were couched as pay back for her scheme, which emasculated him. When Anne went running to Henry, her husband's partner and her trusted friend, to confirm rumors of his infidelity with Neely, he advised her to wait it out, intimating that Anne brought this on herself:

Lyon needed something like this for his ego. He's a creative guy, Anne. He feels you sold him down the drain creatively and tricked him into a new career. Which is bullshit -- if he really had it, no one could stop it. But now he's creating again. From a large mass of blubber he's etched a slim, vibrant star, a star who seems to depend on him for the very air she breathes. He's not just a manager now, he's a creator. He feels larger than life. It's a great feeling of power. No man can resist it. And Neely plays into his hands by acting helpless. She's as helpless as a cobra, but that's not the way it appears to him. To Lyon you're the strong one, the tycoon -- *his* Svengali. Actually, Anne, you're not half as strong as Neely -- the Neelys of this world are indestructible -- but with your poise and self-confidence you make Lyon feel like less of a man than Neely does. He probably feels that you castrated him -- and not once, but twice. The first time when
you refused to give up a city for him, and now by buying him an agency.246

Indicative of the confusion of the times, the novel offered no solution to a problem that had no name, the difficulty women encountered balancing career and family. There were no happy endings and no easy way to remedy the paradox of success. Fulfillment in the public sphere brought unhappiness to each woman, but this did not suggest that a life of domesticity would have been better. In fact, the novel intimated that the alternative would have been much bleaker. Financial independence was as much a blessing as a curse: when Neely was broke she had fewer options and was in worse shape than when she was on top. Interestingly, there seemed to be no overt criticism of the callous attitude Neely had toward her twins. That was rather a minor point, overshadowed by Neely’s betrayal of Anne’s trust and her overall insufferable personality. Motherhood did not save Anne’s marriage, either. Although Lyon came back to her out of guilt when their daughter was born, his concern did not last. Even when Anne scaled back her career, Lyon continued to be a philanderer. The overriding message of the novel regarding career and family was that having it all was difficult if not impossible. The story ended on a despondent note, with Anne turning to drugs to quell her dismay after she caught Lyon in the arms of another client. Anne lamented in the closing passage:

She knew now there would always be a Neely or a Margie but each time it would hurt less, and afterward she would love Lyon less, until one day there would be nothing left -- no hurt, and no love.

She brushed her hair and freshened her makeup. She looked fine. She had Lyon, the beautiful apartment, the beautiful child, the nice career of her own, New York -- everything she had ever wanted. And from now on, she could never be hurt badly. She could always keep busy during the day, and at night -- the lonely ones -- there were always the beautiful

246 Susann, 420.
dolls for company. She’d take two of them tonight. Why not? It was New Year’s Eve!247

Regarding the sexual revolution, the novel clearly detailed how attitudes had evolved concerning sexual freedoms. Premarital sex was seen as the norm rather than the exception. None of the women suffered consequences as a result of their premarital affairs. In fact, Lyon was shocked to find Anne a virgin and almost refused to sleep with her because of the sheer novelty of it: no one wanted the responsibility of deflowering a virgin.248 Jennifer had a lesbian affair as a teenager and found more sexual satisfaction with her female lover than with men, a definite stab to the playboys of the world.249 Regardless, she went on to become a sex symbol; she also fell in love with and became engaged to a respectable male senator. Extramarital affairs were treated more harshly than premarital sex but were also portrayed as commonplace.

One message came through clearly, and that was an increasing fixation on looks and youth. Women in their thirties were dismissed as old. Thinness appeared a most desirable asset. Regarding sex, the novel portrayed being a seductive tigress in one’s twenties as acceptable, while in middle-age it seemed desperate. Helen Lawson, a forty-something singer and movie star adored by the public, was characterized as a pathetic old hag in her personal life, throwing herself at any man who would have her. Valley of the Dolls clearly warned women about the dangers of losing a man to another woman and portrayed a manless existence in middle-age as pathetic. There seemed to be no perfect solution, just two rather equally bleak alternatives: to succeed and emasculate or to avoid liberation and thus loneliness. The sympathy of the reader, however, is with the strong, independent women. The men, aside from Anne’s trusted

247 Susann, 442.
248 Susann, 125-126.
249 Susann, 171-177.

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friend Henry, are self-centered, immature, reactionary, unfaithful, and incapable of appreciating liberated women. In this regard, the novel echoed the sentiments of a number of young college women whose biggest problem was not letting go of their inhibitions but finding men who could accept their newfound liberation.

The novel proved to be a smashing success; it was the fastest selling book in publishing history and the number one best seller of 1966, and Jacqueline Susann acquired fame and fortune. In "Happiness is Being Number 1," appearing in the October 19, 1966 issue of Life, author Jane Howard discussed Susann's rapid trajectory to publishing fame.\textsuperscript{250} She attributed the novel's success to the fact that readers could identify with her characters. Undeterred by critics who scoffed at her lack of literary talent, she quipped, "I'm not interested in turning a phrase; what matters to me is telling a story that involves people. The hell with what the critics say. I've made characters live, so that people talk about them at cocktail parties, and that, to me, is what counts."\textsuperscript{251} Bernard Geis, Susann's publisher, noted that the novel had the three ingredients for success: a popular theme (sex and drug addiction), skillful treatment of the subject matter, and intense promotion. Howard commented that the novel enjoyed heavy promotion by Susann and her husband/publicist Irving Mansfield, suggesting that the relentless and innovative marketing made up for the book's lack of skillful treatment. Mansfield stated that his wife's novel reached not only the book buying public, but "those who never bought a book in their lives."\textsuperscript{252} Indeed, Susann's book propelled her and the topics she discussed into the limelight.

\textsuperscript{250} Jane Howard, "Happiness is Being Number 1," \textit{Life}, 19 August 1966, 69-78.
\textsuperscript{251} Jacqueline Susann, as quoted in Howard, 69.
\textsuperscript{252} Howard, 70.
Susann was an entrepreneur and a strong supporter of the consumer-driven sexual revolution. Like Hugh Hefner or her close friend Helen Gurley Brown, who called Valley of the Dolls "maddeningly sexy,"253 she typified the patriotic, capitalist supporter of mainstream America’s sexual revolution. In her article, Howard discussed the extent to which the Mansfields went to promote the novel, including advertising on television, in entertainment sections of newspapers, and book tours. They measured their success in fiscal terms, although stating that it was "status and pride" they were after, not riches.254 Their efforts garnered them all of the above.

The following year, when she had acquired a sort of celebrity status, Susann used her fame to voice her opinion on men and women in an article called "Why Women Are So Much Smarter Than Men," which appeared in the November 1967 issue of Ladies’ Home Journal.255 She came off as a rather conciliatory feminist and a strong supporter of maintaining the differences between masculinity and femininity. Initially sounding rather feminist, she complained about the way history recounted only the heroic feats of men and left out women.256 She championed the inherent biological differences between men and women but challenged the stereotypes that women were inferior to men. Critics, she claimed, chastised women for writing and reading only escapist romance novels. She threw it right back at the men, claiming that all the novels written by men were about war. She quipped, "Maybe this proves that men are escapists in fiction. The little boy who liked to play with tin soldiers still likes to read about them."257 She noted that women were physically stronger by virtue of

253 Howard, 71.
254 Howard, 76.
their ability to bear children, and she gave a lighthearted example of the stereotypical man who would not stop to ask for directions, thus undermining the myth of male intellectual superiority. In her closing paragraph, she threw a bone to men, thus weakening the tenacity of her convictions and softening her feminist zeal as she predicted the future of gender relations:

Men will still lose their way on dark roads and discover new frontiers intentionally or accidentally. And we'll go along with them and concede that they are the stronger sex, the brighter sex and the most beautiful sex. But I still think women are the more practical sex. Men think they can get along without women, but we know we can't get along without them.\footnote{Susann, "Why Women Are So Much Smarter Than Men," 158.}

The tone of Jacqueline Susann's article suggested that middle-aged women like herself felt fairly comfortable with their status in American society. Most of her gripes were about the past, not the present, and her tone was playful and humorous. Susann, a sexually liberated and financially independent woman, came from a generation different than that of the radical feminists, the younger women of the baby boom generation who would soon begin to articulate their rage. She celebrated the differences between men and women and felt grateful enough for her position in life to suggest playfully that it was better to let men keep thinking they were superior than to burst their bubbles. Her attitude typified most middle-aged, enlightened women who were happy to be different yet equal. She also tapped into growing concerns about the state of men's bruised masculinity.

In similar fashion, \textit{The Sensuous Woman} by "J," published in 1969, became a runaway bestseller, a sexual instruction manual designed to teach women how to keep their men loyal in the face of the mounting sexual temptations in American society. Many of her suggestions had to do with boosting men's
wounded egos. Interestingly, she also challenged the impossible standards of beauty being promulgated by the media, assuring women that they did not have to look like fashion models in order to keep their men. They need only to become so skilled in the arts of seduction and flattery that their men would never need to stray. The opening paragraph read as follows:

For the last five years men have been telling me the most delicious things -- that I'm sexy, all woman, that perfect combination of a lady in the living room and a marvelous bitch in bed, sensual, beautiful, a modern Aphrodite, maddeningly exciting, the epitome of the Sensuous Woman.

Some of the most interesting men in America have fallen in love with me. I have received marriage proposals from such diverse personalities as a concert pianist, a best-selling author, the producer of three of America's most popular television shows, a bomb expert for the CIA, a trial attorney, an apple grower, a TV radio star and a tax expert.

Yet you'd never believe it if we came face to face on the street, for I'm not particularly pretty. I have heavy thighs, lumpy hips, protruding teeth, a ski jump nose, poor posture, flat feet and uneven ears. I never wear tight skirts, low-cut dresses, or bikinis. I am not brilliant and I don't have a magnetic personality. In fact, I'm shy. Mothers, wives and girl friends think of me as the wholesome, apple pie, girl-next-door type (which, translated, means non-sexy).

But while those mothers, wives and girl friends are burning up over that spectacular looking blonde undulating provocatively in the peekaboo leopard print, I'm the one that's having the wonderful time --- and keeps getting and keeping men.259

Her introduction highlighted two issues central to women in the 1960s. The first was that average American women were concerned about keeping pace with the sexual revolution by the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although women were making progress in the public sphere, many still held onto traditional


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values regarding marriage and family. Marriages faced increasing pressure to create erotic pleasure zones in the bedroom at the same time that more women than ever entered the workforce and tried to balance the demands of career and family. The acceptance of singles culture affected not only singles, but also married couples as extramarital affairs, wife-swapping, and open marriages became more common. Since men for the most part still held on to economic power in the late 1960s and early 1970s, average American women grew increasingly concerned about their ability to keep their men from straying, as evidenced by the popularity of "J"'s book. The second concern of women involved "J"'s attack on the sexualization of femininity and unrealistic standards of beauty. The author recognized that women bought into the media-driven fixation with looks, sexuality, and appearance. She went on to counsel readers from her experience:

For through intelligence and hard work, I have become a Sensuous Woman. And that's what almost every man wants. More than beauty. More than brilliance. More than great housekeeping abilities. More than a model mother to his children. He wants a Sensuous Woman. Because she makes him know that he is the most remarkable man that ever lived. Women who can clean, look good and mother children are a dollar a dozen, but a woman who can make a man feel his uniqueness is worth the world to him.

Even if you are knock-kneed, flat-chested, cross-eyed and balding, you can learn to make him feel that way and, in doing so, reap the wonderful benefits for yourself, such as the enriching experience of a really joyous and fulfilling sex life.  

The target audience for the book was not the swinger set, but average American women trying to hold on to some semblance of tradition in the face of wrenching social change. The secret to success, she suggested, was not to wear

260 "J", 11.
provocative clothes and purchase cosmetic products, but to learn the skills of seduction, flattery, and sexual prowess that would render such measures unnecessary, to become in effect a sycophantic seductress. She rang the death knell for domestic containment, eschewing any notion that women could entice men to stay faithful with shiny porcelain and spotless kitchen floors. Her overriding message was that a woman needed to shed her hang-ups about sex and start experimenting or face losing her man to a woman who had already done so. Chapters such as "How to Drive a Man to Ecstasy,"261 "What to Talk About in Bed and When to Laugh,"262 "Aphrodisiacs,"263 and "Men's Fantasies"264 included detailed instructions on how to create ambiance and entice men, as well as specific instructions about sexual acts and techniques and exercises to enhance the sexual experience.

More importantly, her work recognized that the sexual revolution and the unleashing of female libido had in some instances had a detrimental impact on marital sex lives. As discussed earlier, magazine articles and sex literature in the late 1950s and early 1960s suggested that men felt intimidated by the mandate to generate erotic bliss with their partners. Stated "J":

When it was ordained that it was all right and even important for the female to gain sexual satisfaction, the book world found itself on a new sales crest. Psychologists, psychiatrists, and gynecologists rushed to their typewriters and dictaphones to grind out hundreds of prestige-building and moneymaking marriage manuals advising husbands and wives (single people had to fend for themselves) on what married sex was supposed to be like and how couples should score themselves on sexual satisfaction. Nearly every modern couple read those books and practiced what the authors preached. Techniques varied but the rules were clear. Women were sexually responsive and

261 "J", 107-131
262 "J", 148-151
263 "J", 134-139
264 "J", 152-155
it was up to the men to arouse and satisfy women, no matter how much effort was involved. Any man who, through sheer exhaustion or rebellion, chickened out, was a louse. That old rule, that a woman was designed to give pleasure to a man went down the drain when the first marriage manual sale was rung up on the cash register.  

She went on to note that marriage manuals placed too much pressure on men to perform, creating too much role reversal, and in the process dooming sexual intimacy and relationships in general. Stated "J," “There were husbands who got so uptight over the responsibility for and complexity of techniques supposedly necessary to excite their wives that they no longer enjoyed sex, and made love to their wives even less than before.” Additionally, she noted that most of the literature put the onus on men and failed to teach women how to take responsibility for their own sexual satisfaction. Women, too, were victims of the new ideology:

Women who remained unresponsive were labeled frigid, although only a few years before, that same lack of responsiveness was comfortably touted as normal and even ladylike and not worthy of worry. A great many older women got caught in this trap. It isn’t easy to take thirty, forty or fifty years of brainwashing and reverse it suddenly to meet new ideas.

Many another husband worked so hard and so intensely and humorlessly to arouse his wife that the lady got nervous, felt she had to appear passionate when he was trying so hard and so faked the erotic feelings she longed to experience.

Some women, afraid to reveal the fact that they were empty sexually, told their husbands and girl friends they were achieving tremendous pleasure and then worried secretly about why they didn’t.

The big sexual emancipation, and the flood of conflicting written expert advice that came with it, brought many women large, economy-sized headaches.

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265 “J,” 94-95.
266 “J,” 96.
267 “J,” 96-97.
Her observations were based on discussions with women she had personally counseled regarding their sexual problems. The popularity of her book suggests that many women experienced this problem and looked for ways to solve it. Her book was different from other marriage manuals and sex books in that it gave women specific instructions about techniques to enhance their own pleasure and that of their partner while also advising them on how to shed their inhibitions. It was at once liberating and reactionary. For example, she concluded that the sexual role reversal prescribed by the revolution was detrimental to the relationship:

> By not listening to our instincts, we women made a number of mistakes. This chapter is about our worst mistake, for it cost some of us our men. We were so busy in bed getting “satisfied,” that we forgot our responsibilities as women. We were greedy, selfish, and dumb. We forgot that there were two of us in that bed and that it was just as important to give the man a wonderful experience sexually as it was to receive it.

> We forgot what females have been taught since time began: that as women we should be ardent conservationists of our most important natural resource-man-instead of heedlessly using him up.

> Pin up on your bed, your mirror, your wall, a sign, lady, until you know it in every part of your being: We were designed to delight, excite and satisfy the male of the species. Real women know this.268

While this book explicitly advocated a more liberated attitude toward sex, it also veered in the direction of recoiling against women’s equality, this time in the sexual realm. It embraced the differences between men and women and advocated a more traditional role for women in the bedroom. Conversely, it prescribed a new morality regarding sex and relationships in that it was not written expressly for married couples. She in fact made no real distinction

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268 "J", '97.
between married and single couples. She encouraged experimentation before commitment and blurred the line between married and singles culture, reflecting the impact of the counterculture and the changing values in American society. One chapter, called "Party Sex-Swapping and Orgies and Why It's Better Sometimes to Bring Your Own Grapes," discussed the growing "swinger" subculture. She noted that "respectable" couples found this new "hobby" a way of keeping the excitement in a relationship, a way to break the monotony of monogamy without betraying the trust between the couple. In short, it was a way to have your cake and eat it too.269 Both Valley of the Dolls and The Sensuous Woman sent average American women a message about women's liberation in the public sphere and the bedroom: if taken too far it could threaten masculinity and backfire on women. Conversely, both books also argued for a new and more liberated attitude toward sex for mainstream Americans. This was partly due to the fact that by the late 1960s images of free love from the counterculture and the excitement of singles life permeated American society. If the average American woman ignored the revolution, she could be left behind. The Sensuous Woman went on to become the third best-selling book of 1970,270 a testament to the fact that women worried about keeping pace with change.

Proponents of the counterculture, although a small minority compared to the silent majority who elected Nixon, had a huge impact on American society given the way their values disseminated through the popular culture. Free love was a defining feature of the movement, epitomized in the Woodstock festival of 1969, with its naked dancing, drugs, and random sexual encounters. The lines between respectability and the counterculture grew increasingly faint, as musicals like Hair (1969) celebrated nudity and assaulted mainstream values, and


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as publications like *Screw* willingly shed the veneer of respectability worn by predecessors such as *Playboy.* The blurring resulted from the fact that the sexual revolution was being propelled by divergent forces. One force was rooted in the sex industry and was linked to the materialism and upward mobility characteristic of early cold war America. This trend started in the mid-1950s with the launch of *Playboy,* boomed in the 1960s, and was already accepted as part of the status quo by middle Americans by the late 1960s. Indeed, by the late 1960s, *Playboy's* notions of sexuality were so accepted among Americans who could be seen as mainstream that they were almost cliché to the younger baby boom generation. The other force advancing the shift in mores regarding sexuality was the growing anti-establishment attitude of America's youth -- rooted in the nation's hawkish cold war foreign policy, particularly regarding the Vietnam War. The counterculture rejected mainstream values and institutions such as marriage and traditional gender roles, and evinced a disdain for materialism rooted in quasi-Marxist notions of class conflict.

Popular films of the era challenged the values of middle-class Americans and glorified youth culture. *The Graduate* (1967) reflected the new morality regarding marriage and sexuality, and it further complicated the constructs of married and single lifestyles. In the film, Mrs. Robinson, a middle-aged woman and a victim of the bad marital sex life described by "J" in *The Sensuous Woman,* is reduced to seducing young Benjamin Braddock, a recent college graduate who is the son of her good friends, in order to satisfy a raging libido that has ostensibly been ignored by her stuffy old husband. Ben is a victim of conformity, longing to break out of his parents' paradigm and live life on his own terms, but he is a

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272 D'Emilio and Freedman, 306.  
bit too timid really to embrace the counterculture. This forbidden liaison suffices as an assault on the status quo for a time. Ironically, however, Ben falls for Mrs. Robinson's daughter Elaine, a young and beautiful Berkeley student, much to the dismay of Mrs. Robinson. As his relationship with Elaine develops, she finds out about his affair with her mother, breaks off all contact with Ben, and gets engaged to her Berkeley boyfriend. Mrs. Robinson rushes to see the marriage through to completion, and she encourages Elaine to stay away from Ben. However, the film ends with Ben stealing Elaine from the altar on her wedding day, and with the two of them hopping on a bus to nowhere, rejecting the lifestyle of their parents and its attendant hypocrisy.

*The Graduate* mirrored a number of trends in American society. It highlighted the growing generation gap between the baby boomers and their parents, lauding the former and exposing the later as hypocrites. It also supported the assault on materialism typical of the counterculture, as Mrs. Robinson had all the material comforts articulated as desirable by Helen Gurley Brown and others, yet she lacked passion and purpose in her life. Through the film, average married couples were able to face vicariously their worst fears, ending up like the Robinsons, thus reinforcing the notion that an exciting sex life was an essential component of marriage. If monogamy was to succeed at all, it would require a complete makeover like that described in *The Sensuous Woman*. Yet, Ben and Elaine did not completely abandon the notion of monogamy and love, they simply rejected the institutions that seemed to prevent those around them from finding happiness. Ultimately, the younger generation was presented as morally upright in the film, as Elaine and Ben rejected the paralysis of a bad marriage and material comforts in exchange for love, adventure, and truth. The message of the film supported to some degree the findings of Gael
Greene in *Sex and the College Girl*, whose research confirmed that premarital sex was rampant on college campuses by the mid-1960s. However, she made a sharp distinction between the vast majority of unmarried monogamous couples who were choosing to cohabitate rather than marry, thus having sex with one partner, and a small percentage of “promiscuous” women who were having sex with multiple partners. The divides between married and single couples and the rules for each certainly became more fluid into the early 1970s.

Other films such as *Easy Rider* (1969)\(^{274}\) attacked mainstream values more directly. The film offered a sympathetic portrayal of its countercultural protagonists. It glamorized the freedom afforded its drug-dealing, freewheeling heroes. Two friends travel by motorcycle from Los Angeles to New Orleans to make a drug deal. While en route, they encounter communal living situations, drop acid, engage in random sexual liaisons, and attract the attention of young, “respectable” nubile females in a small Southern town, which ultimately leads to their demise. They are eventually shot by a truck full of redneck Southerners, ostensibly because of the threat they pose to their hypocritical and small-minded value system. As the motorcyclists weaved their way through America, the sympathy of the viewer was with the unconventional heroes. They brandished the American flag, championed freedom, and exposed the intolerance of small town America. The most poignant scene in the film was undoubtedly its most telling, when the heroes break bread with a simple rancher and his Mexican wife and family who offer them a respite from their journey. They commend the rancher, alluding to the fact that he had achieved the ultimate American dream.

The film intimated that the counterculture did not reject traditional family values entirely, it was simply a force pushing against the hypocrisy of American

\(^{274}\) *Easy Rider*, dir. Dennis Hopper, prod. Peter Fonda (Columbia Pictures, 1969). All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the film.
society, particularly regarding the Vietnam War and the racism of the American South. The violence of the antagonistic southern rednecks who promulgated the murder of the freedom riders was symbolic of America’s violence in Vietnam and the rift in American society regarding the war, civil rights, and the new morality. After the Tet Offensive in 1968, Americans were even more tired of the war, and President Richard Nixon put his Vietnamization plan into action. The sentiments of the film regarding Vietnam were not completely at odds with mainstream values, and having the personal freedom to experiment with alternative lifestyles was also a feature of the larger American society. However, the film appalled conservatives, who used it as a rallying point for the New Right. Spiro Agnew, at a Republican fundraiser in 1969, chastised the film which he claimed glorified a pair of drug dealing thugs. He offered it as an example of how an “effete core of intellectual snobs” was trying to ruin the country. The Vietnam War had split Americans along class lines, and Agnew emerged as a hero to the working class. Because of the college draft deferment, many more affluent and intellectual young people avoided serving in the war. By the early 1970s, most Americans wanted the war to end, but peace with honor was Nixon’s promise, not a precipitate withdrawal. This would later be achieved by an escalation of the war through bombing raids on North Vietnam and an invasion of Cambodia, forcing the debate about the war and the antiwar demonstrations to grow more violent and radical into the 1970s.

One film served as a clear representation of the dilemma facing middle Americans trying to deal with a rapidly changing set of values: the comedy Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice (1969). The film centers around two married

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couples who are best friends. Both couples are affluent Californians in their thirties and each couple has a five-year old son. Bob is a documentary film maker, Ted is an attorney, and their wives do not appear to have jobs. Carol, however, has a domestic servant. Both women are extremely sexy and alluring.

Their lives change when Bob and Carol attend a countercultural retreat at "The Institute" outside San Francisco, the subject of Bob's latest documentary film. At first they are merely observers, but over the weekend they get sucked into the vortex of self-discovery in a twenty-four-hour session where they engage in primal screams, hug strangers, and get in touch with their repressed feelings. "Don't tell us what you think," the guru-like counselor advices, "tell us what you feel about that remark." Bob and Carol are transformed.

Upon their return to suburbia, they try to engage Ted and Alice in their newfound awareness, but Ted and Alice are not enticed by the new Bob and Carol. "What do you feel about my hair, Ted?" Bob asks. After a bit of prodding, Ted confesses, "it's a bit long." Bob replies, "That's beautiful Ted! What you're really saying is I'm a middle-aged man trying to act like one of those hippie kids." Carol embarrasses their waiter, whom she has known for years when he says, "I truly hope you enjoyed your meal." Carol asks, "Do you really? Do you really feel that way?" Ted and Alice are not impressed with the new Bob and Carol. Alice scolds Carol for making the waiter feel uncomfortable. Ted closes the evening with a sarcastic, "Bob, I feel you should pay the check."

Upon their return home, Bob confesses to Carol that he had an affair on a recent trip to San Francisco. Curiously, she does not get angry or upset, and in fact this makes Bob angry. He accuses her of being in denial. "Do you love her?" she asks. "No, of course not!," he replies. "It was just physical." "Well then," Carol says, "I don't see why I should be jealous." They go on to talk it out, make
love, and end up closer than ever.

The next evening, they convince Ted and Alice to smoke marijuana with them and Carol tells them the good news. “Bob had an affair,” she says with a smile. This proves too much for Ted and Alice. Upon their return home, Alice’s libido slips into a deep freeze and she refuses Ted’s advances. It is obvious that she and Ted have been having sexual problems. Later, Alice goes to a counselor to discuss her problems, but he seems to have no answers either. Just as she is making a breakthrough, he announces that time is up and ushers her out the door, in stark contrast to the twenty-four hour, time-has-no-meaning world of the countercultural retreat, where real breakthroughs were not held to a time table. Alice seems paralyzed by the pace of change. She cannot rely on traditional modes of therapy or an outdated value system, yet the lengths to which Bob and Carol are going to spice up their marriage are throwing her into a tailspin.

In an interesting turn of events, while Bob is away Carol has an affair. Bob comes home to find a strange man in his bed, who turns out to be Horst, her tennis instructor. At first Bob flies into a jealous rage. After a few minutes, however, he regains his composure and praises Carol for being brave enough to have an affair in their home. Bob ends up having a drink with Carol’s rather bewildered lover. Carol’s attitude reflected the success of the women’s liberation movement, especially in the sexual realm. Women’s sexual liberation, it seemed, was a double-edged sword. If Carol accepted Bob’s indiscretions, he would have to learn live with hers. Rather than turing to “dolls” like Anne Welles, she seduced her tennis instructor. There was to be gender equality in marital infidelity.
The next weekend, Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice go to Las Vegas. As they are getting ready to leave their hotel, Carol gives a jubilant recounting of their latest marital infidelity to Ted and Alice. Then Ted confesses that he had an affair on his last business trip to Miami. This is simply too much for Alice, who is still struggling with her own lack of libido and is disgusted by their actions. Alice starts to strip, insisting that she get in on the fun. “Let’s have an orgy,” she suggests as she takes off her cloths. Bob and Carol try to stop her, telling her that this is a completely different situation. They are best friends, they love each other, they cannot do this. Eventually, they talk through it. Carol praises Alice for being so strong and bold, and they eventually win over the reluctant and rather shy Ted. He says, in the line that perhaps says it all, “We’ll have an orgy and then we’ll go see Tony Bennett.” After some fumbling around, they embark on their adventure, but almost as soon as the kissing begins they stop. Wordlessly, they look at each other as if through different eyes, realizing how ridiculous they look. Silently, they get up, dress, and leave for the concert, as the refrain from a popular tune wafts through the film: “what the world needs now is love, sweet love, that’s the only thing that there’s just too little of.”

The implication, at the end of the film, is that the two couples had made their peace with the counterculture and its brand of sexual liberation. Having crossed over into the world of the young and the free, they recommitted themselves to their middle-aged sensibilities. The film enveloped the profound state of confusion for average married couples found themselves in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At once enticed and repelled by the changing morality, with the ever-present threat of marital infidelity looming, they struggled to incorporate these values into marriages where sexuality played an increasingly key role. Carol and Bob, while adopting the veneer of sexual sophistication,
could not maintain it. Alice was driven to frigidity because of her conflicted set of emotions, on the one hand wanting to be sexy, free, and fun but on the other hand devastated by the way sex was being treated as if it were simply a new parlor game.

Carol, played by Natalie Wood, and Alice, played by Dyan Cannon, were both sex symbols. They pranced around in bikinis and miniskirts and were a far cry from the matriarchs of yesteryear. Looking more like Barbie dolls than stay-at-home moms, they typified the conflicting feelings of most women during this era. However, they also embodied of a rising spirit of female empowerment. Carol was no victim. In fact, she was more liberated than Bob, and she would not stand for the same old double standard regarding marital infidelity. The film also furthered the construct of the “dangerously sensual” woman. Naturally, if Carol were fat, unattractive, or slovenly, the story would have made no sense. She could not have retaliated with a hot young tennis pro if she looked unappealing. To that end, the film foreshadowed a future in which women and men alike would refuse to grow old gracefully, blurring the lines between married and singles life. The film also hinted at a backlash against sexual liberation, calling attention to the destructive impact of the sexual revolution and the changing values of the baby boom generation on the American family.

The film received four Academy Awards and caught the attention of the press. In a review of the film in the October 3, 1969 issue of Life, critic Richard Schickel called it a "very human comedy" that helped viewers make sense of "contemporary domestic desperations in this 'transitional' era." He claimed:

It summarizes so many issues that cause us anguish and anxiety -- the statistics of Kinsey and Masters, the psychological byproducts of the pill and the pursuit of prosperity, the half-digested advice we have received about the new ways men and women are supposed
to relate to one another.\textsuperscript{277}

The review in \textit{Time} was less laudatory. The reviewer called the final scene where the foursome seemed to "come to their middle-class senses" and curtail their swinging episode "the biggest cop-out since Sidney Poitier appeared as the world's whitest black man in \textit{Guess Who's Coming to Dinner}."\textsuperscript{278} The review was critical of the film for trivializing the subject matter, which may have missed the larger point of the film. It struck a chord with middle Americans because many of them could identify with the characters: they were just as confounded by the new morality as its protagonists. The contents of the film and its reception by the culture indicated an acceptance of the sexual revolution and an acknowledgment of its impact. The film also revealed a culture growing more intolerant of the double standard regarding marital infidelity.

Its images of wife-swapping, orgies, and extramarital affairs among Americans mirrored a reality in American society. An article in the June 21, 1971 issue of \textit{Newsweek} entitled "Group Sex" analyzed this growing phenomenon. Reporting on a growing number of formal and informal "swinger" clubs, the article's author noted that club members were "for the most part mortgage holding, churchgoing young parents who are trying to regulate the sin out of extramarital sex," involved in a nationwide movement including as many as "2 million middle-class Americans."\textsuperscript{279} The article reported that swingers could be found in all areas of the country and came from all walks of life; they were respectable middle-class people, most of them married with children. Swinging was presented as a way to enjoy some of the benefits of sexual experimentation and free love without breaking the commitment of marriage. It was also seen as

\textsuperscript{278} "Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice," \textit{Time}, 26 September 1969, 94.
a way to placate men's craving for sexual diversity, revealing that it usually began when a "restless, generally dominant husband decides that swinging will help him realize his sexual fantasies without jeopardizing his home and family." Wives were generally reluctant at first, "may cry or become sick," but "agree to participate generally out of fear that they might otherwise lose their husbands." However, most women eventually "claim they enjoy it," with more than ninety percent finding pleasure in lesbianism. Swinging men, the article reported, eschewed male homosexual behavior, as the man was there primarily to "prove his masculinity." 280

The swinging phenomenon resulted from two factors acting on American society. One was the growing visibility of the baby boomer generation and its rejection of mainstream American values, which an embrace of free love symbolized. The other was the quiet success of the women's rights movement, which gave women more leverage in their marriages. Men and to a much lesser degree women had been having extramarital affairs for decades, yet they now felt compelled to be honest about them. Marital experimentation replaced marital infidelity because divorce involved serious financial and logistical impediments, and women no longer looked the other way and abided by the double standard. Many couples reported that swinging enhanced their marriages. It gave them a new "hobby," and one woman reported that it finally gave her something to talk about with her husband. In fact, the article reported that most swingers were a "dull bunch," with limited outside interests. 281 Additionally, the prevalence of the swinger subculture indicated that an exciting sex life was more than ever an essential component of a happy marriage, and it would be attained whatever the cost.

Professional sociologists and counselors offered mixed reviews of the impact of swinging on marriage. Some claimed it enhanced marriages by creating a "bizarre, though often temporary bond of togetherness." Others were more critical, noting that the sexual experiences usually turned out to be "joyless, mechanical and dissociative, lacking precisely that element the swingers are searching for -- true sensuality." Regardless, many couples revealed that a little swinging went a long way -- they could get mileage out of the shared memory of their group experiences to enhance their monogamous encounters. The sexual values of Americans had shifted rapidly, both due to the expanded role and expectations of women in the public sphere and the rising visibility of baby boomers who rejected what they saw as the hypocrisy of their elders.

The impact of the generation gap on the sexual revolution found further articulation in Gloria Steinem's 1970 article in *McCalls* entitled "What Playboy Doesn't Know About Women Could Fill A Book." Steinem attacked head on the cliché of what she dubbed the "Playboy Philosophy," in an article which included an interview with Hugh Hefner. Contending that his followers were merely shallow and insecure men perpetually arrested in adolescence, she claimed that they were doing more to feed the ethos of consumerism than to advance the cause of human sexuality. In a sarcastic and often scathing attack on his empire and all it represented, she quipped that even if women over the age of sixteen were capable of being impressed by the "circular spotlight bed, red walls, and 'Drums of Passion' playing on the hi-fi," she found the entire magazine

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283 "Group Sex," 99.
284 Steinem, "What Playboy Doesn’t Know," 76.
lacking any substance. She suggested that his magazine was “oddly conservative about discussing lovemaking techniques or performance,”286 ostensibly because his readers were more comfortable ignoring the fact that women were actually more sexually responsive than men. She also criticized the objectification of women and the commodification of female sexuality, berating Hefner for perpetuating the notion that “women are objects, too; objects whose only peculiar property is an attraction to other objects, so that they will arrive on the scene automatically, like a prize for collected Green Stamps, after the proper string of purchases has been made.” She charged that in his publication “the more complex emotions of human sexuality are pretty much ignored. If women are objects, then conquering them is the emotional limit. And simple conquest doesn’t take very long.”287 She also referred to the work of two other male psychologists who claimed that the "Playboy Philosophy" was actually antisexual, with the fear of emotional involvement masking a repressed fear of impotence.288 Steinem concluded that this philosophy was outmoded for the younger generation:

Today the young know better. A lot of them reject the idea of middle-class status buying, right along with Playboy’s outdated Jazz Polls, and the hypocrisy of women-as-objects, along with the notion that the sexual rebellion is a worthwhile rebellion at all. In the ‘sixties [sic] decade flowering with folk and rock, political concern, and an acceptance of sex as a pleasurable, unhung-up part of life, Playboy stayed four-square in the ‘fifties.289

Steinem recounted her rare interview with the elusive Hefner in his mansion. In an obvious attempt to make him look vapid, Steinem asked Hefner about his lack of concern for political affairs and tried to get him talking about

286 Steinem, “What Playboy Doesn’t Know,” 76.
287 Steinem, “What Playboy Doesn’t Know,” 76.
something other than his quest to get the Supreme Court to overturn obscenity laws. Hefner had a reputation for being reclusive, but he mentioned that he had inadvertently gotten caught up in the ruckus of the Democratic National Convention riots of 1968. He saw the police beating up demonstrators, and that drove home to him the message that society was becoming more polarized. She berated him for not being more involved in society’s problems at large. “I think the sexual revolution is going on just fine without you. I’m just not sure the rest of the country is,” she quipped. She asked him if he had talked to anyone in the Women’s Rights Movement. Yes, he said, and then Hefner lobbed it right back at her: “What annoys me most about this Women’s Lib thing is that, with so many more important problems around today, women shouldn’t be wasting time on this foolishness.” He commented that women had already achieved much of what the feminists wanted. Steinem tried to educate him on the basics of Marxist theory and how it could be applied to race, class, or gender. She asserted that women were being used as a cheap labor pool and, like any oppressed group, had been made to believe in the myth of their own inferiority. Hefner was not buying it. “The militant feminists are pathetic,” he responded. “There’s no comparison to the racial problem.” She predicted that if Playboy tried to make it into the 1970s with that attitude, he would be in trouble. She would later be proven wrong. Steinem, however, launched her own Ms. Magazine, an ode to the goals of women’s liberation, which would struggle into the new millennium, garnering its own niche market but suffering fiscal crisis

293 Steinem, “What Playboy Doesn’t Know,” 139-140.
after fiscal crisis while its circulation dwindled.\textsuperscript{294} \textit{Playboy}, however, continued to gain market share and remains one of the biggest success stories in publishing history.\textsuperscript{295} Ironically, by the 1980s, both magazines ended up being printed by the same company, each doing their part to advance the cause of freedom of speech and capitalism, two hallmarks of American democracy.

Steinem and Hefner made strange bedfellows, yet their paths continued to cross over the years. They were both responsible in their own way for fostering a dangerously sensual female identity. Naturally, the woman who got her first break in journalism by posing as an undercover Playboy bunny, and who was a relative latecomer to the women's liberation movement,\textsuperscript{296} was perhaps the only one who could even get a crack at Hefner. Hefner remarked several times in the interview that he had declined to meet with other feminists and had even kicked them out of his mansion. Steinem, however, was no diplomat. At one point she intentionally tried to fan the flames of discord by remarking, “There are times when a woman reading \textit{Playboy} feels like a Jew reading a Nazi manual.” When she later asked him, “Is there anybody in history you identify with?” he responded by naming Jack the Ripper. “Why?” she asked. “Because -- what you said about \textit{Playboy}? That it was like a Jewish person reading a Nazi journal? Well, I just wanted to say something equally outrageous.”\textsuperscript{297} One could not imagine anyone but the sensuous Steinem

\textsuperscript{294} \textit{Ms. Magazine} was launched in 1971 with 300,000 copies. It was predicted to fail, but the copies sold off the shelves. After its brief successful start-up, the magazine's circulation declined. The magazine continued to face financial hardship over the years. From 1978 to 1987, it was run as a nonprofit magazine through the Ms. Foundation for Education and Communication. In 2001, the Feminist Majority League took over its publication. Today, \textit{Ms. Magazine} has a circulation of 110,000. For more information, see www.msmagazine.com/mshistory.asp.

\textsuperscript{295} \textit{Playboy} currently has the 16th largest circulation of any magazine in the United States with over 3 million copies domestically, and 4.5 million copies sold world wide. For more information, see www.playboy.com/worldofplayboy/faq.

\textsuperscript{296} Douglas, 227-228.

\textsuperscript{297} Steinem, “What Playboy Doesn’t Know,” 140.
maintaining such a cordial dialogue with one of the leading architects of women's objectification.

Steinem could get away with this because she was a feminist who did not look like a feminist. Sex appeal was an essential ingredient for a woman attacking the leader of a sexual empire. *McCalls* made sure to include a picture of Steinem that could have, with some minor modifications, appeared in *Playboy*. With her seductive smile, long, flowing hair, large breasts, and inviting gaze, Steinem in her own way was able to capitalize on the very phenomenon she chastised, although the irony seemed lost on her. Hefner claimed that feminists should be thankful for his efforts to liberate women's sexuality, and he noted that his was a female-friendly organization. For his part, Hefner's claim that the women involved in his empire wanted to be there, and that he was actually in some instances advancing the cause of women's liberation, was a valid one. Many women in the organization profited handsomely from his enterprise, and not just the models. His own daughter, in fact, would go on to become its Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), a fact difficult to reconcile with his reductionist and elementary representations of womanhood. It is easy to see, however, why his publication remained so popular into the coming decades. At once empowered and objectified, liberated and contained, *Playboy's* pets offered men a sexually liberated woman in a docile package, never demanding and always eager to please. Perhaps Hefner's bunnies served as a palliative for middle-class America's men, a nice counterbalance to the intimidating literature on marriage, sexuality, and women's liberation, and radical feminism they found so alienating. *Playboy's* playmates could be counted on to be available, non-threatening, and seductive month after month.

298 Douglas, 227-229.
The radical elements of the women's liberation movement also unwittingly helped to spur on dangerously sensual notions of femininity. By the early 1970s, gender equality had become nearly synonymous with gender sameness and an abandonment of femininity. As demonstrated earlier, mainstream Americans, even liberated women like Jacqueline Susann, were already defensive about the blurring of masculinity and femininity and the abandonment of those constructs. Radical feminism would only further their fears as the women's liberation movement went on to overshadow the more mainstream women's rights movement of earlier days.

The more mainstream women's rights movement had put ideology into action with the formation of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966, which adopted a Bill of Rights at its first national conference in 1967. NOW's Bill of Rights asked for an equal rights amendment to the constitution, a law banning sex discrimination, consideration of paid maternity leave, tax deductions for home and child care expenses, equal and unsegregated education, publicly-funded day care centers, equal job training for women in poverty, and reproductive choice. Through a combination of legislative effort and litigation, the women's rights movement proved very successful. Much like the civil rights leaders before them, women's rights advocates had pressured the administration of President Lyndon Johnson to enforce legislation more aggressively, such as the Equal Pay Act. They also filed suit against newspaper advertisements which classified job openings by sex. They lobbied to pass a stronger Equal Employment Opportunity Act. To foster economic empowerment, NOW and the Women's Equality Action League (WEAL) filed suit against lending institutions for discriminating against single, divorced, and widowed women. In

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1971, the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), formed by Betty Friedan, Bella Abzug, and Shirley Chisholm, worked to increase women's political power. By 1972, women's rights advocates had made significant progress in the political arena, the crowning achievement coming on August 10, 1972, when Congress passed an Equal Rights Amendment and sent it to the states for ratification.

Regardless of these victories, the institutional approach of Betty Friedan and NOW proved outmoded and unsatisfactory to a generation of baby boom women groomed in the direct action techniques of the civil rights and antiwar movements and steeped in the new morality of the sexual revolution and antiestablishment rhetoric. Much like the black power movement and urban riots erupting in the wake of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the 24th Amendment outlawing poll taxes, many self-proclaimed "women's liberationists" were not satisfied. Just as President Lyndon B. Johnson felt betrayed and baffled by the rage of northern blacks in the mid- to late 1960s, Americans appeared confounded and offended by the more virulent strain of feminism which emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The women's liberation movement first gained the true attention of the press with a protest at the 1968 Miss America Pageant. Led by Robin Morgan, activist, organizer, and editor of the 1970 feminist manifesto *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement*, women crowned a sheep Miss America, threw their undergarments or "instruments of oppression" into "freedom trash cans," and drafted a ten-point opposition to the objectification of women and the messages the pageant conveyed.

302 Douglas, 167. The "Stop ERA" campaign and the ratification debate are discussed in Chapter Five of this dissertation.
Women, obviously, felt frustrated by the impossible standards of beauty being promulgated by the media and by the objectification and commodification of female sexuality. In point number one they protested the "degrading mindless-boob-girlie symbol," likening the contest to a cattle call "where nervous animals are judged for teeth, fleece, etc. and where the best 'specimen' gets the blue ribbon." Women, they claimed, were "enslaved by ludicrous 'beauty' standards" and "forced daily to compete for male approval." In point number seven Morgan attacked the "unbeatable whore-madonna combination" Miss America embodied, claiming that Miss America and Playboy's centerfolds were "sisters under the skin." "To win approval," the radicals claimed, "we must be both sexy and wholesome, delicate but able to cope, demure yet titillatingly bitchy. Deviation of any sort brings, we are told, disaster: 'You won't get a man.'" In point number ten, "Miss America as Big Sister Watching You," they charged that the pageant exercised "thought control" by embedding these images into women's minds, "to enslave us all the more in high-heeled, low status roles; to inculcate false values in young girls," and to promote consumerism.

Although the target of the attack was a beauty pageant, the protesters also rallied against America's cold war foreign policy, especially regarding Vietnam and America's race problems. The protesters saw the Miss America Pageant as symbolic of all that was wrong with the country. In point number three, "Miss America as Military Death Mascot," Morgan chastised the practice of Miss America's "cheerleader-tour of American troops abroad." Rather than

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304 Morgan, 200-201.
305 Morgan, 201.
being the icon of "’unstained patriotic American womanhood our boys are fighting for’" (which traditionalists claimed), Morgan labeled Miss America’s war tour as the “Living Bra and the Dead Soldier.” Women liberationists, she claimed, would "refuse to be used as Mascots for Murder." In point number two, "Racism with Roses," they chastised the contest for failing to produce a Black, Puerto Rican, Alaskan, Hawaiian, Mexican American, or American Indian winner in the years since its inception in 1921. In points number four and five, Morgan rallied against the consumerism and the spirit of competition embedded in the contest, calling Miss America a "walking commercial for the Pageant’s sponsors," and criticizing the "’win-or-you’re-worthless’ competitive disease." In "Women as Pop Culture Obsolescent Theme," the women protested against the "cult of youth" and the rate of obsolescence in America’s consumer-driven society. “Spindle, mutilate, and then discard tomorrow. What is so ignored as last year’s Miss America?” they asked.

The fact that the attack on the beauty industry was packaged with an antiestablishment message doomed the solidarity of women and pushed the traditionalists further into the hands of the Hugh Hefners of the world. By making Miss America into a symbol of cold war oppression and racism as well as an icon of objectification, supporters of America’s cold war foreign policy had to rally to the defense of Miss America and all she represented. Had the women’s liberationists simply rallied against the objectification and sexualization of women, they may have found support from conservative women’s groups. By packaging female objectification with third world oppression and framing it with Marxism and anti-American sentiments, they advanced their own mission but
unwittingly furthered the convictions of the New Right and the antifeminist movement.

Radical women's liberationists further alienated Americans by targeting all men as to blame for their problems, once again echoing Marxist notions of class conflict. "The Redstockings Manifesto" claimed that women were an "oppressed class," they were "exploited as sex objects, breeders, domestic servants, and cheap labor," and as "inferior beings, whose only purpose is to enhance men's lives." All this, they claimed, was made possible by the "threat of physical violence." Noting that male supremacy was the "oldest, most basic form of domination," they labeled individual men, not the institutions of American society, as the oppressors. "All men," they claimed, "receive economic, sexual, and psychological benefits from male supremacy. All men have oppressed women." While clearly expressive of the frustrations felt by radical feminists, such rhetoric provided conservatives with ammunition for an attack on feminism and at the same time alienated moderates like Betty Friedan.

Kate Millett was another icon of women's liberation catapulted to infamy, however unfairly, by the media. Her work largely contributed to the movement's notion that personal relationships were politically charged and that women had to work together to change their personal relationships with men if they were to win equality. Professor and author of what became a foundational polemic for the women's liberation movement, she found herself the target of a media debate which began in 1970 with the release of her book, which began as a doctoral dissertation that found an audience well beyond academia. She examined sexuality in the period between 1830 and 1920, exposing the way patriarchy permeated society and literature during this time period. Charging

that personal relationships could be seen in a political light, she claimed that patriarchy was the oldest form of domination, so embedded into the structures of society that it was hardly noticed. Superiors physical strength was not the determinate, she argued, since technological advancements and law codes could check the power of brute strength. Rather, she attributed it to the "acceptance of a value system which is not biological." The chief institution of patriarchy was family, she surmised, with economic, educational, and religious institutions furthering its hold on society.

Millett soon found herself the target of an intense media debate. Much of it was negative, and much of the negative publicity was linked to a critique of her physical appearance. *Time* ran a story on her on August 31, 1970, with an unflattering and combative rendition of her likeness etched on the cover. An artist for *Esquire* created a hideous-looking feminist caricature, ostensibly meant to be Millett. Not all media coverage, however, was so harsh. Anatole Broyard, a teacher of creative writing at the New School and book critic for *Life*, wrote a rather balanced review of her work in a July 24, 1970 article. His review started on a sarcastic note as he opened with the following quotation from her book: "Not only does the ovum journey through the fallopian tubes and so partake of activity, the sperm are caught, held and lifted by the plungerlike movement of the cervix and so partake of passivity.' Here is Kate Millett chiding Freud for equating the 'active' behavior of the sperm with the 'passive' behavior of the ovum with the male and female temperaments." He added, "Miss Millett, certainly, is not passive." He glossed over the more

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311 Millett, 26.
312 Millett, 27.
313 Millett, 33-36.
314 Millett, 33-54.
315 Douglas, 228.
complex aspects of her theoretical framework, but conceded that she had a point regarding the notion of "sexual politics." He agreed with her theory that for many men, "sexual security can be guaranteed only by using women as a velvet-lined jewel box for the safe-keeping of their masculinity," conceding that many men tended to regard sexual conquest as a test of their masculinity, yet would "shrink from her true challenge, from the responsibility to her as a human being."  

Broyard criticized Millett for not giving more agency to women in the game of sexual politics. "Don't women play the game of sexual politics too, -- and win at it?" he asked. Championing the biological differences between men and women, he queried, "Does the polarization implicit in 'masculine' and 'feminine' serve as a stimulant? Would love alone be enough to support sex in the manner to which it has become accustomed?"  

Broyard's review further testified to the fact that many people felt threatened by the abandonment of masculine and feminine constructs, and that gender "sameness" was becoming synonymous with the notion of gender equality. This, perhaps, is what made Millett's work strike a raw nerve in many people. Coupled with the knowledge that men's sexual desire tended to wane with the advent of female sexual liberation, this certainly seemed plausible.

Another article presented readers with a very different, very likable Kate Millett. In "A Day in the Life of Kate Millett," appearing in the February 1971 edition of *McCalls*, author Susan Edmiston presented a softer, more feminine side of Millett. Literally following Millett through her day, Edmiston revealed a funny, charming, loving woman who seemed curious about, perplexed with,

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317 Broyard, 8.
318 Broyard, 8.
but generally unfettered by the public's response to her. The article began with a peek at Millet's home life with husband Fumio Yoshimura, a Japanese sculptor. Edmiston recounted the home coming: 'Kate arrives. 'Hi, Sweetie,' she says to Fumio in a tender, weary way.' She describes Millett as a "short, solid woman" with "even and attractive" features. The article proceeded to chronicle their morning routine, with Kate asking her husband in typically female fashion, "What should I wear, Fumio, long dress or striped pants?" Fumio answered, "Striped pants. Shock them a little."320

Millett was preparing to give a talk to a group of about 1,000 wealthy women, mostly educated, older suburban women who were not working outside the home. The talk did not go well, as Millett first captivated and then alienated her audience. She began by debunking the myth that women's liberation was about bra-burning, and tried to explain her theory about the political aspects of gender domination. She cautioned the privileged women not to be seduced by their economic advantages, noting that although they had it better than some women, they were still subordinated. At first she connected with them, most of them her contemporaries, as she asked, "Years ago when you were in college, wasn't there something rattling around in your head, something you wanted to be?" Then she lost them, Edmiston noted, the moment Millett changed the topics to war, to a questioning of the status quo, and to an attack on masculinity. Millett asked, albeit rhetorically, "How could you have a war if you didn't have masculinity, if you didn't have to join the Marine Corps to prove you're a man?"321

Millett enjoyed more success later that day at Bryn Mawr, where she worked as an adjunct professor. In class, everyone -- students, professor, and

320 Edmiston, 138.
321 Edmiston, 199.
reporter -- sat on the floor and discussed, in casual fashion, such topics as the media’s role in perpetuating sexism and the black woman’s dilemma regarding whether to channel her energy toward combating racism or sexism. In this setting, among young college students, Millett was a hero, although she was nearly a generation older than her students. Naturally, college students at an all-female college like Bryn Mawr would be more receptive to Millett’s message. However, there was also a generational element to the disparity. Young women found it easy to apply Marxist doctrine to gender relations and were more likely to accept an assault on masculinity and criticism of the government’s involvement in Vietnam. The older women at the luncheon were pillars of the establishment Millett was trying to discredit. They may have been able to identify with the plight of domestic containment, many of them having given up their own aspirations in order to raise families, but they were too steeped in the feminine mystique and too invested in America to accept overt criticism of foreign policy and masculinity. Overall, the article presented a very sympathetic view of Millett, who came off looking like a quirky, likable, and irreverent absent-minded professor with a loving and stable marriage and a witty sense of humor.

Other popular magazines in the early 1970s offered similarly balanced and positive treatments of the feminist movement. In the July 1970 issue, McCall's presented the views of five supporters of the feminist movement in "Five Passionate Feminists." Interestingly, one of the feminists was a man, a mathematician-turned-women’s liberation activist named James Clapp. Confessing that he had endured rounds of ribbing from many people ranging from his male friends to his mother as a result of his conversion, he explained

322 Edmiston, 199.
why he became a feminist: "The answer is simple: In life, as in sex, it's more fun when the woman is an active partner." He noted that men had much to gain from the feminist movement. It had the potential to free them from the responsibility of having someone "realize her success vicariously" through her man. He reported that one of his friends with a stay-at-home wife confessed that he worried about her lack of outside interests, concerned that she would become a burden and a bore after the children grew up. Clapp asked, "Why would any man choose to bear that burden? Or the burden of having to bring home all the bacon? Or the burden of trying to cope with a woman who is dissatisfied, resentful, bored -- and probably boring, because she has been forced to lead a boring life?"

Further dispelling the media stereotype, he stated that, "despite the clichés, feminists tend to be attractive. The new feminists are preponderantly young, and many of them come into the movement because of their attractiveness -- because they have been made to feel more oppressed than most women, more blatantly treated as sex objects, and they want to be treated as people." Clapp, a single man with reservations about the institution of marriage, noted that he "could not conceive of marrying a nonfeminist" nor would he go out with one. Equating the women's liberation movement with civil rights, he acknowledged that treating women as sex objects was "a tempting thought, just as owning a slave is a tempting thought." Further justifying his commitment, he commented that "a man works for the liberation of women for

324 James Clapp, as quoted in "Five Passionate Feminists," 55.
325 James Clapp, as quoted in "Five Passionate Feminists," 115.
326 James Clapp, as quoted in "Five Passionate Feminists," 115.
327 James Clapp, as quoted in "Five Passionate Feminists," 115.
the same reasons a white person works for the liberation of blacks, because anything that diminishes their humanity must also diminish mine." 328

Clapp's admissions revealed a growing trend toward a more liberated man in the 1970s and was a marked departure from the Playboy notions of masculinity embedded in Hefner's attitude. However, there were mixed messages in Clapp's testimonial. His comments and others in the article suggested that female sexual liberation was inexorably linked with feminism in the women's liberation movement; this positioned sexuality as an important ingredient for feminism's acceptance. By equating women as active participants in a relationship to their active participation in sex, he suggested that sexual liberation accompanying the larger goals of feminism sweetened the deal for men. Since he was obviously denying marriage but not sex, his comments suggested that premarital sex was the norm for women in the movement. By debunking the myth that feminist women were unattractive, he unwittingly sent a message that it was easier to get men to sign on to women's liberation if the women appealed to men. Finally, as a self-proclaimed monogamous man in his twenties who questioned whether he needed the "state's stamp of approval [marriage],"329 he revealed that younger people questioned the very institutions of society, with gender roles and marriage being just two aspects of the larger assault on mainstream values. Reading between the lines, one could surmise that feminists were the best-kept secret for liberated American bachelors -- financially independent women who would not pressure them to marry, attractive, sexually exciting, and intellectually stimulating.

Another seventy-seven-year-old "passionate feminist" who identified herself as Mrs. Malcolm Peabody articulated the concerns of older women about

328James Clapp, as quoted in "Five Passionate Feminists," 115.
329Clapp, as quoted in "Five Passionate Feminists," 115.
the women's liberation movement. She favored equal pay, equal employment opportunities, birth control, and day care, but did not agree with "radical feminists who believe 'this is war and man is the enemy.'"\textsuperscript{330} She noted that it was a positive step for women to assume some of the financial responsibility for the household, but she also felt women should consider childrearing in and of itself a worthy endeavor. Surprisingly, Anne Koedt, another feminist featured in the article and the founder of the New York Radical Feminists, did not consider herself anti-man and did not see women's liberation as a movement seeking to dominate men, as demonstrated in her following comment: "the idea of a female-dominated society is as repugnant to me as the idea of a male-dominated society. What I want to cut off is the power men exercise over women."\textsuperscript{331} Koedt had gained notoriety in 1968 when she wrote "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," an article debunking the Freudian notion that vaginal orgasms were more "normal" than clitoral orgasms, and that women who failed to reach orgasm through intercourse alone were somehow sexually immature.\textsuperscript{332} She suggested that women who in the beginning had rejected her ideas had started to come around and admit she was right. It was very difficult, she noted, for women to talk about their lack of sexual response in the orgasmically-charged culture, explaining about a woman's failure to reach orgasm during intercourse that "you never lose that tiny bit of doubt that it's your fault."\textsuperscript{333} However, she thought it essential to good sexual relations that couples be able to talk honestly

\textsuperscript{330} Mrs. Malcolm Peabody, as quoted in "Five Passionate Feminists," 53.
\textsuperscript{331} Anne Koedt, as quoted in "Five Passionate Feminists," 114.
\textsuperscript{332} "Five Passionate Feminists," 114. Note: Sigmund Freud's theory became politically charged because radical feminists argued that this myth perpetuated women's dependence on men, even for their sexual pleasure. Clitoral orgasms were seen as more "liberating" because ostensibly they were not contingent upon intercourse with men. For a concise historiography of the female orgasm, see Naomi Wolf, \textit{Promiscuties: The Secret Struggle for Womanhood} (New York: Fawcett, 1997), 139-161.
\textsuperscript{333} Anne Koedt, as quoted in "Five Passionate Feminists," 114.
about sexual satisfaction rather than women "faking it," as many of her contemporaries confessed they had done in the past.

Koedt also discussed relationships, motherhood, and marriage. She admitted to having an abortion in her junior year in college as she was beginning to develop a sense of self: "A man can choose to have both children and a life of his own. A woman can't." Citing her own relationships with men as examples, she claimed that in each of her three serious relationships with men her needs and goals were subsumed by the man in her life. She longed for the kind of relationship where "two self-generated people value each other not because of what they do for each other, but because of what they are to themselves." She doubted that she would find it.

Indeed, for the women's liberationists, the personal was paramount. There was scant discussion in the article about women's access to the public sphere. There was no mention of the ERA or any other impending legislation. In fact, movement coverage began to echo much of the previous discourse played out in the pages of women's magazines in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when articles focused on issues of relationships, sex, and personal fulfillment. Now tougher, the tone was edgier, in keeping with the times. One teenaged "passionate feminist" noted that she had formed a women's liberation group at her New York City high school not to discuss women's access to the public sphere, but because the girls wanted a forum to talk about birth control and sexual relations with men, information they were not getting at school. Sexual liberation and relationships with men were at the forefront of the women's

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334 Anne Koedt, as quoted in "Five Passionate Feminists," 55.
335 Anne Koedt, as quoted in "Five Passionate Feminists," 115.
336 Judy Stein, as quoted in "Five Passionate Feminists," 53.
liberation movement, and public discussion of these issues only furthered the importance of sex appeal as an essential component of liberated womanhood.

By the early 1970s, even the traditional bastion of femininity, *Ladies' Home Journal*, was willing to give some attention to women's liberation, albeit only after the "occupation" of its offices. Editor John Mack Cash agreed to an eight-page special section in the August issue as a consequence of the eleven-hour sit-in staged by women's liberationists six months earlier. In his introduction, he pointed out that when he really began to listen to women in the movement, he found that beneath the "shrill accusations and the radical dialectic" they had important messages about the "persistence of sexual discrimination in many areas of American life." He felt that as the leader of a decades old magazine dedicated to serving as an "emotional and intellectual forum for American women," it was his duty to report on the movement. He ended his introduction on a guardedly optimistic note: "This new movement may have an impact far beyond its extremist eccentricities. It could even triumph over its man-hating bitterness and indeed win humanist gains for all women -- and their men."

The eight-page insert poked fun at the *Journal* in a section entitled, "Should This Marriage Be Saved," mocking the magazine's regular column "Can This Marriage Be Saved," in which counselors normally recommended that the woman abandon her aspirations in the name of family harmony. In this example, thirty-three-year-old Barbara, who had given up aspirations of being a senator to marry Bill and have children, ended up divorcing her husband. Barbara noted that Bill did not want sex very often and was preoccupied with his career. He was demanding about the house and not supportive of her need to find fulfillment outside or inside the home. The article did not glamorize divorce,

noting that Barbara often felt insecure about entering the job market and the singles scene. However, she found the courage, went back to school for a degree in political science, and secured a full-time job as a researcher for a sociology project at a college. The article advocated the establishment of "divorce centers" to help women make the transition to financial and emotional independence.

In a section about sex and love, women revealed very mixed opinions. A group of five women aged twenty-three to thirty-seven, provided commentary. All of them valued a satisfactory sex life but felt there were impediments to achieving one. Many women felt pressure to reach sexual fulfillment. Stated twenty-three-year-old Betty:

The first time a man asked me if I had an orgasm, I felt very insulted. I later realized it was part of the sexual revolution. Before, women had to pretend we never liked sex. Now we have to pretend we always do. It became clear to me that men had to prove their virility by making women have orgasms.339

Ann, a thirty-seven-year-old married woman with two children, revealed: I knew perfectly well what orgasms felt like because I had them by myself, but I thought something was wrong with me because I never had one through intercourse.340 Carla, a twenty-five-year-old married woman, confessed that she had had similar thoughts, but after talking to other women, she realized that she was right and that "everyone who said there was something wrong, psychiatrists and lovers included, was crazy."341 They all mentioned that the discovery of their clitoris was revolutionary and liberating. One woman differed a bit from the others. Sue, a twenty-five-year-old teacher with a live-in boyfriend, said she had orgasms during intercourse all the time. She felt that for true sexual liberation to occur, "wives are going to have to stop lying, husbands

339 Betty, as quoted in "The New Feminism," 70.
340 Ann, as quoted in "The New Feminism," 70.
341 Carla, as quoted in "The New Feminism," 70.
are going to have to accept the truth, everyone's going to have to start to
discover what female sexuality really is." 342 One woman, twenty-three-year-old
Dina who was separated from her husband, linked the discussion to lesbianism.
She claimed that lesbianism was attractive because it was "the only setting where
one person doesn't have to dominate another." Later, Dina explained why
younger, more radical feminists seemed eager to abandon masculine and
feminine constructs, noting that such gender divides forced men and women to
live out "two separate sets of self-interest," making a good relationship
impossible. The movement had the potential to "enable us all to develop all parts
of ourselves and not to have to worry about being 'feminine' or 'masculine.'
Then we will be able to be human." 343

In addition to relationship issues, more traditional feminist goals were
discussed. In "Women and Work," the liberationists noted that forty-two percent
of all women worked outside the home, and most of them did so out of
necessity. Working-class women were kept from high-paying jobs because of
outdated protective laws which limited the amount of weight women workers
could carry or prohibited them from working nights. The median wages earned
were reported as follows: white men $7,164; nonwhite men $4,528; white women
$4,152; and nonwhite women $2,949. 344 They strove to highlight the racial as well
as the gender and class inequality which permeated the workforce. Calling
housewives "slaves in solitary confinement," 345 they encouraged communal
daycare in inner cities, citing the Black Panthers who were providing day care
and medical facilities for the urban poor as a good example. 346 In "Your

342 Sue as quoted in "The New Feminism," 70.
343 Dina as quoted in "The New Feminism, 70-71.
Daughter's Education, " they criticized both the formal and informal educational institutions which inculcated feelings of submissiveness and inferiority in women. Starting even before school, children were segregated by sex: "Boys play with erector sets. Girls play with Barbie dolls."347 In later years, girls took history classes where they learned only about the heroic feats of men. In the absence of female role models in the classroom, they were left to "swallow the image the mass media and advertisers constantly peddle to the public."348 Still later, they claimed, trade schools and universities alike discriminated against women in admissions practices. They called for the elimination of sex stereotyping by parents and schools, the end to segregated classes, and more frank and open discussions about birth control and sex education for both sexes.349 Finally, they encouraged the formation of consciousness-raising groups which they described as groups of eight to twelve women who gathered weekly to discuss such topics as marriage, relationships with men, sex, abortion, or the meaning of femininity.350

Although this article dealt with the more mainstream concerns of feminism, like equal pay for equal work and day care centers for working women, the majority of the space was devoted to personal issues. The solidarity of women and the exclusion of men, according to the article, had become a necessary component of the "new feminism." At some points, the tone felt similar to that of NOW or other less radical organizations, but at other times the insert had a more revolutionary zeal. Attacking the notion of same-sex schools and traditional gender traits put moderates and traditionalists on the defensive. Lauding the Black Panthers likely further distanced the liberationists from

mainstream Americans. Although much of what the women said about women's obsession with appearance, the unrealistic beauty standards, and the objectification of women could have been acceptable to conservative women, they deepened the divide between themselves and mainstream Americans when they merged their critique of objectification with an assault on femininity and gender stereotyping and an ode to revolutionaries like the Black Panthers. By advocating women-only consciousness-raising sessions, they alienated men. Thus, by waging war on *Ladies' Home Journal* and its readership, however necessary they felt it was to do so, they made themselves visible to its conservative readers and became targets for a conservative backlash. They also fostered the acceptance of a hypersexualized femininity as an alternative to radical, man-hating women's liberationists -- or worse yet, radical lesbian-feminists. In the early 1970s, radical lesbian-feminists formed an identity around the idea that women could and should be lesbians by choice, that this was the only way to combat the patriarchy that was so embedded in the fabric of society. As scholar Lillian Faderman put it in her history of lesbian life in America:

> Their decision to become lesbian-feminists stemmed from their disillusionment with the male-created world and their hope of curing its ills. The fruitless war in Vietnam, the proliferation of ecological problems, the high unemployment rate even among the educated, the general unrest that was left over from the 1960s, all contributed to their radical lesbian-feminist vision that American culture was in deep trouble and drastic measures were required to reverse its unwise course.351

The interest in personal politics resulted in a fascination with "confessional" literature which dealt with topics of an intimate nature like relationships, sex, marriage, and family. In this context, Sylvia Plath's 1962 novel *The Bell Jar* was

finally published in America in 1971. At the time of the novel's completion in 1962, Plath was living in England, where her novel was immediately published upon its completion. In America, her work was dismissed as too trivial in its subject matter to be taken seriously. In England, she enjoyed a small following but only gained fame posthumously when she asphyxiated herself in a gas oven in 1963, one year after her book came out, leaving behind two small children and a haunting body of work. By 1971, however, her message fell on sympathetic ears. Her prose and poetry enjoyed immense popularity in consciousness-raising sessions, and reading *The Bell Jar* became a rite of passage for women's liberationists around the country.

The story traces the progression of protagonist Esther Greenwood's mental illness in the conformist, patriarchal world of 1950s America. The plot closely mirrored the story of Plath's own life. Esther attends an all-girl college, much like Plath's alma mater Smith College, and becomes a writer and poet. An internship at a women's magazine launches her career, but then she suffers a mental breakdown. Like Plath, Esther is confined to an institution and given shock treatments. Plagued by mental illness and constrained by the dictates of a patriarchal society which forced women "under the bell jar," Esther eventually gets released. The chauvinist psychologists and doctors only make Esther's condition worse. She finds success temporarily in the world of publishing, but ultimately succumbs to mental illness and takes her own life.

Plath's message was ahead of its time in the early 1960s, but it was curiously timely in 1971. It served as a warning to women's liberationists about the depressing alternative for independent women who tried to conform to society rather than change it, thus furthering their convictions. Society had

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353 Frances McCullough, forward to *The Bell Jar*, vii-xv, reprinted 1996.
changed for women, but it was far from ideal. Plath's novel reminded women just how far they had come and it likely fueled their anger and spurred them on to do more. In her 1972 article "Reconsidering Sylvia Plath," author Harriet Rosenstein claimed that Plath's legacy lay at the center of contentious politically-charged debate between lovers and loathers of her work. Plath, according to Rosenstein, provoked this reaction because she struck a raw nerve among traditionalists and radicals alike. Rather than disputing the genius of Plath's work, which had already been well established in the literary community, people argued about "the world view her verse and fiction insist on." The Plath legacy had been appropriated by feminists who saw her suicide as "a function of her sexual oppression." Rosenstein felt that readers failed to separate the particular from the general messages in her work. Much of Plath's turmoil stemmed from a personal battle with mental illness, yet many of her personal battles also reflected wider problems in American society. Although Rosenstein felt that Plath's poetry dealt more poignantly with her personal anguish, she noted that most Americans had not read her verse. Rather, her name had become synonymous with her very popular book *The Bell Jar*. The novel implied that "for any girl with half a brain, coming of age in the fifties was a brutalizing experience." While the novel had been passed over for being too trivial a subject in the 1950s, it became by the 1970s a focus of a "Holy War," which Rosenstein felt was indicative of the "violent outrage and equally violent despair which seem inevitable responses to our era." The Plath controversy served as further evidence that in the 1970s the personal had indeed become political.

355 Rosenstein, 38.
356 Rosenstein, 38.
357 Rosenstein, 39.
358 Rosenstein, 38.
By August 1971, the movement had even found its way into the most pedestrian of middle-class American publications, Reader’s Digest. In an article called "A Feminist Manifesto," Lucy Komisar, vice-president for public relations of NOW, alerted Americans to the fact that sexism confined women to second-class citizenship by dividing people through prescribed sex roles which perpetuated the myth of female inferiority. Feminists were not, she claimed, attacking women who chose to be housewives, they simply advocated that all people - male and female - should have a choice in life. She encouraged Americans to look at women as individuals instead of as a collective group with predetermined roles. She blamed Freud, the sex-segregated school system, and the advertising industry for furthering the notion of female subordination. Komisar contended that sexism hurt men and society at large, as men constantly had to prove their masculinity with power and violence. Finally, she recounted the long battle for women’s rights, starting with the Romans and ending with the vote in 1920. She positioned the "new feminism" as the last episode in the long saga, predicting that women would succeed in winning full equality in this final battle. The article came out strongly against sex stereotyping and furthered the notion that gender equality went hand in hand with the abolition of gender differentiation. She did not blame men but rather the institutions of society for perpetuating sexism. However, her article opened with a citation from eighteenth-century liberal Jean-Jacques Rousseau and another by twentieth-century fascist Adolf Hitler, both of whom believed that women were inferior and should be confined to the domestic sphere. The article seemed somewhat inflammatory, though perhaps not as much so as other movement

360 Komisar, 106.
361 Komisar, 106.
362 Komisar, 108.
rhetoric, and it reached a wider and more diverse audience than articles in women's magazines.

Between 1966 and 1972, an entire cultural landscape had been reshaped. The advertising industry and mass media fueled this process by incorporating elements of the counterculture, radicalism, and the changing morality regarding sex and marriage. Social upheavals over America's cold war policy in Vietnam and America's racial problems tore the nation apart. American films grew increasingly risqué, and the lines between married and singles culture grew increasingly faint. Women's liberationists challenged the assumptions of American society regarding gender roles, and the sexual revolution reached its apex. The television industry in particular contended with these forces. Networks struggled to address the new morality of the American public within the restrictions of its medium, trying at once to keep pace with society but to avoid alienating its more conservative viewers. Television once again served as a cultural forum to negotiate social change, and much of it involved the role of women.

In 1966, ABC, the network that had tried unsuccessfully to profit from the growing singles culture with Honey West (1965-1966), endeavored again in 1966, this time with the less threatening and more successful That Girl (1966-1971). The show centered around Ann Marie, a young twenty-something, single aspiring actress who struggled to make it on her own in New York City. Working odd jobs and attending a variety of dead-end casting calls, Ann was often aided by her boyfriend, a junior magazine executive named Donald Hollinger, and by her father. Both men in her life appeared amused rather than threatened by her attempts to be an independent woman. In early episodes, Ann was portrayed as a subtly sexy, perky, and somewhat ditzy "girl" (even the title of the series
suggested infantilization). However, as the series progressed, Ann transformed into a much more independent and formidable woman. A comparison of the premier episode in 1966 and the final episode in 1971 demonstrates the transition made by Ann Marie, whose character represented the millions of young American women who were just like "that girl." Indeed, her shift showed in microcosmic form the changes in women's identity during the height of the feminist movement and the sexual revolution.

In the premier episode, which aired on September 8, 1966, "Don't Just Do Something, Stand There," Ann first meets Donald. She is working at a newsstand at his office building, and their paths cross when they both stop in at a furniture store in the same building and try to buy the same desk. They have words over the conflict, and it is decided that Ann has the more valid claim to the desk. In a gesture of comic female dependency, she then asks Donald if she can borrow ten dollars for the downpayment. Meanwhile, back at her newsstand job, two men approach Ann to see if she wants to be in a television commercial. Ann is ecstatic. The commercial is to be filmed in the building and will involve a fake robbery and Ann's staged abduction. While they are filming the commercial, Donald thinks Ann is in danger, and he attempts to rescue her, much to the dismay of Ann and the television producers. Donald apologizes and goes on his way. Later that day, he goes back to the furniture store and finds Ann in real trouble: the furniture store owner is trying to seduce her in exchange for a deal on the desk she wanted, and Ann is losing the battle to fend off his advances. Donald arrives at just the right moment, rescues her for real, and asks her to dinner.

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363 "Don't Just Do Something, Stand There," That Girl, 8 September 1966, ABC. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
This episode reflected a number of changing gender concerns in American society in 1966. For one, the image of the sexy, single girl had replaced the spinster of yesteryear. Ann was a desirable woman who was single by choice, not because she could not attract a man. Throughout the series, it was Donald who wanted to get married, not Ann. However, Ann was also portrayed as ineffectual in her ability to attain economic independence, which was likely a reality for women in an era when women were relegated to low-paying service sector jobs. She was not a threat to masculinity, and although Donald looked foolish the first time he tried to rescue her, his heroism was welcomed in the end. To that end, the episode reminded women that the world of singles culture was fraught with dangers and annoyances, and that sexual liberation was a double-edged sword. Although they were freed from the mandate to marry and settle down early in life, sexy single women also had to contend with unwanted attention from maulers and creepy crawlers like the furniture store owner.

The final episode, "That Elevated Woman," which aired September 19, 1971, presents a very different Ann Marie and reflects the impact of the women's liberation movement. It revolves around Ann's attempts to explain the essence of the women's liberation movement to Donald. Ann had been attending some "consciousness raising" sessions and she is trying to get Donald to discuss the movement with her. The group had asked the women's liberationists to invite the men in their life to the next meeting, and Donald does not want to go. He argues that the movement is pointless and that women already have equality. Ann argues back, noting that men objectify women and intimidate them with their brute strength. She wants Donald to appreciate her

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That Elevated Woman," That Girl, 19 September 1971, ABC. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
intellect, not just her body. She challenges gender stereotypes, asking why men refuse to play poker or watch sports with women. They agree that it would be interesting to explore each other's worlds and strike a compromise: Donald will go with Ann to a women's liberation meeting and Ann will go to a hockey game with Donald. He is reluctant at first, but she seduces him into going by showering him with hugs and kisses.

On their way to the meeting, they get stuck in the elevator and have a chance to hash out their differences. Women need men to protect them, Donald claims. He reminds her of the time when they met and he saved her from the predatory furniture salesmen. She counters that if men did not behave that way, women would not need rescuing. He tells her that she already has that for which women's liberationists are fighting -- independence, a successful career, and a relationship based on mutual respect -- and he intimates that it is the meetings which are making her miserable. They get out of the elevator in time to catch the tail end of the meeting, and Ann sees that no other men have attended. She learns to appreciate Donald, and he comes off looking like a hero. The episode ends with Ann and Donald talking about hockey. He is amazed that she knows so much, and then finds that she has been reading up on it. She asks, lightheartedly, what he would think about a female hockey player. He is fine with the idea, he says, noting that there is only one place where females should be excluded: women's liberation meetings.

The episode reflected the success of the women's liberation movement in that, although it was trivialized, it was being discussed. Ann came off as a much more mature and confident woman than she had in the earlier shows. Her clothes were more distinguished and she no longer wore her hair with girlish bangs. She had achieved financial success on her own, and she had a relationship
that was for the most part equitable and based on mutual respect. She still retained an element of girlish charm and was still very sexually attractive, but that was tempered by a more articulate demeanor. The idea of blurring the lines between genders and exploring each others' worlds was presented as a positive step in the relationship, not as a threat to masculinity. However, the episode also ridiculed the women's liberation movement. Donald effectively proved, through the example of Ann, that women had already achieved equality and were in fact free to do whatever they wanted with their lives. Women like Ann, the episode implied, were putting all this in jeopardy by imbibing movement rhetoric. Moreover, the underlying message was that sex appeal was an essential component of liberation. Ann seduced Donald into going to the meeting, and that was presented as perfectly acceptable. If men could use their physical power over women, women could always fight back with their sexuality. The dangerously sensual compromise had begun.

Another attempt at portraying a single woman came from NBC with the short-lived series *Julia* (1968-1971). The series concerned a widowed nurse named Julia Baker, played by singer Diahann Carroll. Julia's husband had been killed in Vietnam. She had a six-year-old boy named Corey and worked in the medical office of the fictional Astrospace Industries for the irascible yet likable Dr. Morton Chegley. The show has been analyzed primarily for its relevance to race relations, as it was the first sitcom to feature an African American in a leading role since *Beulah* ended in 1953, and it made a concerted effort to deal with issues regarding integration and race relations. Many of the episodes focused on racial issues and depicted a society coming to terms with racial

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365 Brooks, 466-477.
equality.  

However, the show is equally valuable as a source of information about the changing images of women.  

In the premier episode, which aired on September 17, 1968, Julia moves to Los Angeles to make a new life for herself and her son Corey after her husband’s death.  

She rents a stylish apartment and applies for a job at the clinic of Astrospace Industries. When she arrives for the interview with Dr. Chegley, the front office manager erroneously tells her that the job has been filled, ostensibly because of her race, and sends her away before Dr. Chegley even meets her. When Dr. Chegley gets wind of this, he reprimands the manager, sends for Julia, interviews her, and hires her for the position. During the course of the show, Julia settles into her new life, meets some liberal white neighbors, and enjoys a flirtation with the television repair man. At show’s end, it is implied that Julia and Corey will find happiness and acceptance in their new surroundings.  

The episode was obviously trying to portray a liberal attitude toward race, with Chegley playing the role of enlightened white benefactor. The subtextual messages regarding women, however, were a bit more reactionary. As Julia was leaving the interview, Dr. Chegley told Julia to “make herself pretty,” because he was “tired of looking at ugly nurses.” Comparing Julia to Beulah, the change in appearance of its leading ladies was dramatic. Beulah was a true matriarch: heavy-set, brash, assertive, and confined to the domestic sphere as a domestic servant for a wealthy white family. Julia, on the other hand, was beautiful, sexy, thin, classy, and successful in the public sphere. Like Ann Marie, Julia relished her independence. Although courted by a host of men, including two steady boyfriends during the show’s history, she remained single, ostensibly...

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366 For an analysis of the show’s significance regarding race, see Jones, *Honey I’m Home*, 188-190 and 214.  
367 *Julia*, "Premier," airing on 17 September 1968, NBC.
As with the media's sanctioning of Gloria Steinem as the poster child for women's liberation, the culture was once again sending a message to women that, regardless of race or ethnicity, liberation and independence were only palatable when women were so attractive and sexy that it was clear they were single by choice, not out of necessity. Thus, both *Julia* and *That Girl* furthered the construct of the dangerously sensual woman. The same year *Julia* premiered, the Barbie Revolution also went multiracial. In a similar nod to racial equality in 1968, Mattel introduced Christie, Barbie's African American friend. Christie was equally endowed with perky breasts and bodily proportions not found in nature. Both *Julia* and *That Girl*, however, had lost their appeal by the early 1970s, with both series ending in 1971. The messages were too trite, the humor too contrived, and the representations of America's complex social issues too reductionist to appeal to an increasingly sardonic and sophisticated adult television audience. By 1971, American society had lost some of its innocence in the wake of resumed bombings in North Vietnam, the invasion of Cambodia, and the deadly student protests at Kent State University and Jackson State University. *All in the Family* (1971-1981) premiered that same year, a show that used humor and sarcasm to attack head-on the issues of racism, sexism, foreign policy, and the generation gap.

The triumph of liberalism in popular culture was paralleled in the political arena. In 1972, Congress passed the ERA and sent it to the states for ratification. Within a year, thirty states had ratified the amendment. Concurrently, a small group of women led by conservative writer and attorney Phyllis Schlafly started a "Stop ERA" campaign designed to derail the movement, a battle that would be

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368 See Brooks, 466; Jones 188; and the *Julia* episode "Parents Can Be Pains," airing on 1 December, 1970 on NBC.
369 For more information, see Mattel's website at www.barbie.com/40th_Anniv/40Years/1968.asp
won over a ten-year period. In 1973, women achieved a final landmark victory for gender equality and reproductive rights, and the movement soared to the height of its success. In Roe v. Wade, the United States Supreme Court, overturning a Texas abortion statute, ruled that during the first trimester of pregnancy, states could not prohibit a woman from obtaining an abortion, thus removing the final barrier to reproductive choice for women.

That same year, Erica Jong's groundbreaking novel, Fear of Flying, marked a radical departure in women's writing and gave voice to the mounting turmoil of women when faced with choices regarding marriage, career, and sex in the wake of the sexual revolution, feminism, and the radicalization of society. Using brash and frankly sexual prose, expressing female sexual desire in language that made Valley of the Dolls appear almost Victorian in its demeanor, Jong was hailed as a revolutionary: she was women's answer to Henry Miller. The novel was loosely based on Jong's own life, but she took some creative license with her protagonist.

The novel features Isadora Wing, a twenty-nine-year-old freelance writer who is in her second marriage, this time to a conservative psychoanalyst named Bennett. Isadora accompanies her husband on a trip to a conference in Vienna, all the while fantasizing about the anonymous, consequence-free "zipless fuck," which she describes as a "platonic ideal," where "zippers fell away like rose petals, underwear blew off in one breath like dandelion fluff. Tongues intertwined and turned liquid. Your whole soul flowed out through your tongue and into the

370 The "Stop ERA" campaign was a success. The amendment expired in 1982, three states short of ratification. For a complete overview of the ERA, see Phyllis Schlafly, "A Short History of the ERA," The Phyllis Schlafly Report, www.eagleforum.org and NOW website at www.now.org. The "Stop ERA" campaign is discussed at length in Chapter Five of this dissertation.

mouth of your lover."372 Brevity and anonymity were essential components of the perfect "zipless fuck," but Isadora forgets that along the way.

At first the "zipless fuck" is just a fantasy, but Isadora is soon enticed to live out her secret desire with Adrian Goodlove, a British analyst at the convention who is straddling the boundaries of countercultural abandon and mainstream sensibilities. Goodlove is dressed more like a young hippie than a stuffy shrink, complete with a grubby beard and sardonic sensibilities, and Isadora sees in him the potential to release her from a life of boredom and propriety. It is clear that her fantasy is compromised from the start, however, as she sits listening to his lecture, swooning over him, doodling his name, and writing "Mrs. Isadora Goodlove" on her note pad like a school girl. After a round of flirtations which drive Bennett crazy with jealousy, she eventually leaves her husband and embarks on a grassroots tour of Europe with Adrian. Adrian is all the while feeding into her fantasy, playing the quintessential existentialist lover. They sleep under the stars, go for days without bathing, have group sex encounters, and engage in rounds of pointless intellectual banter.

Surprisingly, the sex is never very good. Adrian is at "half-mast" most of the time, compared to her husband Bennett who, she mentions repeatedly, was the one man she knew who was never impotent. Adrian, divorced father of four with a steady girlfriend somewhere at home, gets his kicks teasing Isadora and coaxing her out of her middle-class sensibilities. He instructs her on the basics of existentialist decorum. She must focus on the present, not worry about the future, shed her obsession with time, forget about Bennett and her marriage. Isadora tries to remain emotionally detached, but finds herself falling in love with her "zipless fuck," the fatal mistake. At novel's end, Adrian cuts her loose in

the middle of a drunken evening, abruptly informing her that their affair is over because he has to leave that evening in order to meet Esther and the children the next day. It is clear to her that she had been duped, the faux existentialist had been planning this all along. She feels completely betrayed, irate, and terrified. Adrian, she realizes, was just another philandering hypocrite. Isadora is crushed when Adrian leaves her, and she frantically tries to get in touch with Bennett, who has long since left the conference. She divides her time between indulging her devastation and berating herself for being so weak. Spending an evening alone in a hotel, Isadora finally discovers what she had been looking for: the courage to face life on her own. She confronts the possibility of being manless, looks it in the eye, stares it down, and comes to terms with it. A renewed and reinvigorated Isadora finally tracks down Bennett, determined that if she does decide to stay married, it will be on very different terms.

Isadora personified the liberating confusion women felt in the wake of radical social change. Raised in the 1950s under the mantle of conformity and coming of age in the 1960s with its mandate for indulgence, she enjoyed the benefits of the sexual revolution and feminism to a degree, taking the middle ground in the culture wars of the era. She engaged in a period of reckless sexual experimentation before her first marriage, finished her master's degree, and was a far better writer rather than she was a housewife. Yet Isadora ultimately opted for a life of security by marring Bennett. Her character remained a watershed in women's sexual liberation, as Isadora sought sexual adventure for herself, not to please, attract, or keep a man. In fact, she left two husbands. Unlike the women who were reading The Sensuous Woman to learn how to please and keep a mate, Isadora wanted a man who could please her not just by performing in bed but by igniting her passion for adventure and by giving into a total abandonment of
responsibility. It was an unrealistic expectation, Isadora knew it, and that is what made it so true to life. Unlike Anne Welles in *Valley of the Dolls* who fretted over whether she could be sexually responsive, and then only could be when she was truly in love, Isadora's desire could not be quenched, even by marriage to a man she loved. Contrary to the "swinger" wives who were often reluctant participants in their husband's fantasies, Isadora articulated pure, socially unacceptable, raw, and dangerous female desire. Bennett was the faithful one, she the vixen. Perhaps more than her ideas, it was the frank manner in which Jong gave voice to them that made this female protagonist so revolutionary. Isadora asked:

> What was it about marriage anyway? Even if you loved your husband, there came that inevitable year when fucking him turned as bland as Velveeta cheese: filling, fattening even, but no thrill to the taste buds, no bittersweet edge, no danger.\(^{373}\)

She was not against marriage. It was nice and secure. But, she asked:

> what about all those other longings which after a while marriage did nothing much to appease? The restlessness, the hunger, the thump in the gut, the thump in the cunt, the longing to be filled up, to be fucked through every hole, the yearning for dry champagne and wet kisses . . . all the romantic nonsense you yearned for with half your heart and mocked bitterly with the other half.\(^{374}\)

Expressing the frustration many women felt having been raised with contradictory images of womanhood in the postwar period, she berated the advertising industry and women's magazines for contributing to the schizophrenia:

> What all the ads and whoreoscopes seemed to imply was that if only you were narcissistic enough, if only you took proper care of your smells, your hair, your boobs, your eyelashes, your armpits, your crotch, your stars, your scars, and your choice of Scotch in bars — you

\(^{373}\) Jong, 9. 
\(^{374}\) Jong, 9.
would meet a beautiful, potent, and rich man who would satisfy every longing, fill every hole, make your heart skip a beat (or stand still), make you misty, and fly you to the moon (preferably on gossamer wings), where you would live totally satisfied forever.\footnote{Jong, 10.}

Even intelligent women fell for the sales pitch, Isadora claimed. If a wife desired any man besides her husband, she felt guilty. Women were plagued with urges beyond unquenched sexual desires, harboring the same intangible longings for freedom and adventure that had previously only been a feature of masculinity. Isadora went looking for the "zipless fuck" as an antidote for her marital malaise and her reluctantly led life of propriety. The ultimate "dangerously sensuous" woman, she had the potential to throw American values into complete chaos. Perhaps the only factor that saved her from complete vilification at the hands of traditionalists was that she was childless.

Isadora, however, could not quite pull off her meaningless sexual affair. She ended up emotionally attached to Adrian, a louse who did not even deserve her. Thus, she embodied the inherent contradictions young women felt growing up with one foot in the world of \textit{Leave it To Beaver} and one foot in the world of \textit{Ms.} magazine, all the while steeped in images of sexy, provocative women who seemed to undermine the ideals of traditionalists and feminists alike. She found herself falling in love with Adrian, yet berated herself for doing so. As she was lying awake in a pup-tent listening to her lover snore, she longed to be "normal," not to crave the adventures, to be naive rather than liberated, to be:

\begin{itemize}
\item some ordinary girl out of \textit{Seventeen Magazine},
\item to be that good little housewife,
\item that glorified American mother,
\item that mascot from \textit{Mademoiselle},
\item that matron from \textit{McCall's},
\item that cutie from \textit{Cosmo},
\item that girl with the Good Housekeeping Seal tattooed on her ass and advertising jingles programmed in her brain.
\end{itemize}

That was the solution! To be ordinary! To be unexotic! To be content with compromise and TV dinners and "Can This Marriage Be Saved?"
had a fantasy straight out of an adman's little brain.\footnote{Jong, 277-278.}

Isadora, like many women, felt a bit battered by the contradictory messages she had received throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Messages of empowerment gave women aspirations, yet they were juxtaposed to images suggesting that the exercise of that power would bring misery to women and chaos to the country. Isadora retreated to a fantasy of simpler times and simpler minds, but the significance is that she did not stay there. Eventually, she found the inner strength to go on, as she waited in the bathtub of Bennett's hotel room for his return, having finally tracked him down:

I hugged myself. It was my fear that was missing. The cold stone I had worn on my chest for twenty-nine years was gone. Not suddenly. And maybe not for good. But it was gone. Perhaps I had only come to take a bath. Perhaps I would leave before Bennett returned. Or perhaps we'd go home together and work things out. It was not clear how it would end. But whatever happened, I knew I would survive it. I knew, above all, that I'd go on working. Surviving meant being born over and over. It wasn't easy, and it was always painful. But there wasn't any other choice except death.\footnote{Jong, 339-340.}

Women had made progress. There would be no pharmaceutical overdoses or gas ovens for Isadora Wing. It simply would not have fit. Jong's novel lacked the desperation, the gut-wrenchingly painful pits of despair into which women fell in *The Bell Jar* or *Valley of the Dolls*, where strong, unconventional women became victims of their own aspirations. Isadora not only pulled herself out of her malaise and faced her "fear of flying," she was also able to laugh at herself, and readers were able to laugh with her. Armed with the security of a career and the cultural acceptance of women's independence, Isadora did not succumb to suicidal despair, she simply rose above it all to a higher level of self-awareness and higher degree of self-confidence. Isadora and
the freedom she represented for women, however, would foment a powerful backlash designed to clip her wings and return her to the nest.
CHAPTER FIVE
From Feminist to Femme Fatale:
Backlash, Compromise, and the Sexual Save

I'm a bitch, I'm a lover, I'm a child, I'm a mother
I'm a sinner, I'm a saint, I do not feel ashamed.
I'm your hell, I'm your dream, I'm nothing in between
You know you wouldn't want it any other way.378

By the early 1970s, the prevailing climate of opinion in America included an acceptance of premarital sex, the orgasmic potential of women, and the moderate goals of feminism. Married and single Americans sought exciting and blissful sexual relationships, Congress sent the ERA to the states for ratification, and popular culture embraced more sexualized and liberated representations of femininity. Indeed, one of the most popular sitcoms of the 1970s, The Mary Tyler Moore Show (1970-1977), featured a single woman in a lead role, and another pop culture phenomenon, Charlie's Angels (1976-1980), erased any lingering doubts about the endurance of the sexy single girl. Between the early 1970s and the early 1980s, however, feminism lost much of its appeal. The antifeminist movement gained support, Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980 with the support of the conservative Moral Majority, and the ERA had failed ratification by 1982 during the ten-year period specified by Congress. An increasingly sexualized feminine ideal survived, nonetheless, in the face of the conservative resurgence and the rise of the New Right. Rather than rallying against the increasingly sexualized depictions of women, antifeminists sanctioned them as hallmarks of femininity, as viable alternatives to the androgynous, masculine, and antifeminine constructs attributed, however unfairly, to radical feminists and proponents of gender equality.

In the early 1970s, radical lesbian-feminists added another element to the explosive debate about sexuality and women's roles in society. The subculture represented a small but vocal minority of the total lesbian population, yet they had a rather vast impact on the backlash movement. Its adherents were mainly young, activist women groomed in the civil rights movement who advocated lesbianism as a preferable alternative to heterosexual relationships. In doing so, they also challenged prevailing assumptions that homosexuality was a consequence of biological destiny. Rather, radical lesbian-feminists saw lesbianism as a choice, and as an antidote to male domination. Lesbianism was to these young women a political statement and a lifestyle choice. Although their political points were often valid and their techniques were in keeping with the identity politics of the time, many middle-class and working-class lesbians did not share their views, contending rather that radicals were hindering the overall advancement of homosexual rights in American society. Moreover, the linking of lesbianism to feminism gave conservatives an additional means of discrediting the women's liberation movement, in the process helping to swing moderate Americans into the antifeminism camp.379 Radical lesbian-feminists rallied against objectification of women and the increasingly sexual depictions of women in the media and society in general. To be politically correct, women needed to forego make-up, high heels, tight skirts, and provocative attire in favor of earthy, loose-fitting, simple organic clothing. Lesbians also took issue with a goal-oriented heterosexual sex which focused on achieving orgasm rather than intimacy as a primary purpose. They advocated instead mutual touching, hugging, holding hands, and other non-genital forms of intimacy among females.380

380 Faderman, 229-231.
Although mainstream organizations like NOW initially tried to distance themselves from the radical factions of the women's liberation movement and lesbianism, by the early 1970s they could no longer hold the line. In 1971, NOW officially recognized the oppression of lesbians as a legitimate concern of feminism. NOW further argued that anti-lesbianism was at its root antifeminist: "Because she defines herself as completely independent of men, the lesbian is considered unnatural, incomplete, not quite a woman -- as though the essence of womanhood was to be identified with men." Not all NOW members were pleased with the incorporation of lesbian issues. Betty Friedan, NOW's founder, argued against the inclusion of the lesbian agenda but she was outvoted. She later suggested that lesbians were sent by the CIA to derail the feminist movement.

In the early 1970s, however, radical lesbian-feminist ideology was completely at odds with mainstream American sentiments on both sides of the political spectrum. Friedan's concerns about the detrimental impact of enfolding lesbians into the feminist movement were not unfounded. Americans, feminist and antifeminist alike, obsessed over heterosexual sexuality in general and orgasms in particular. In the 1970s, best-selling sex manuals like The Sensuous Woman (1969), The Sensuous Man (1970), and the Joy of Sex (1972) replaced the marriage manuals of previous decades. Unlike previous studies on human sexuality which cloaked revolutionary revelations about sexual behavior in bland statistical jargon -- thus making them about as titillating as a report on the reproductive life of bullfrogs -- these books discussed sex in terms that were so frank and explicit they would have been considered pornographic in previous

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382 Faderman, 212.
383 Faderman, 212.
A microcosmic exploration of middle Americans' attitudes toward sex, Dr. David Reuben's *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex But Were Afraid to Ask* shot to the top of the best seller list in 1970, and it went on to become the best-selling nonfiction work of that year. Reuben offered no evidence to support his claims. There was no documentation, no bibliography, no footnotes, nor was there any indication that he did any actual research.

Regardless, Reuben's book propelled him to fame. In it, the psychiatrist from California discussed topics such as oral sex, female orgasms, abortion, and the effects of aging on sexuality in frank, matter-of-fact language.

Although the popularity of his book appeared to signal the triumph of a sexually liberated society, its contents revealed a deep-seated prejudice against and disdain for homosexuals that was in conflict with its overall liberal agenda. Reuben defined male homosexuality as follows:

Male homosexuality is a condition in which men have a driving emotional and sexual interest in other men. Because of the anatomical and physiological limitations involved, there are some formidable obstacles to overcome. Most homosexuals look upon this as a challenge and approach it with ingenuity and boundless energy. In the process they often transform themselves into part-time women. They don women's clothes, wear make-up, adopt feminine mannerisms, and occasionally even try to rearrange their bodies along feminine lines.

Reuben defined homosexuality as a "condition" that could be "cured." He contended that homosexuality was a choice, not a matter of biology, stating, "being naturally that way is one of the many explanations homosexuals grope

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386 Reuben, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know*, 129.
for in a an attempt to understand their problem."³⁸⁷ It was not, he claimed, a
hormone problem either but rather a psychological disorder. He argued that "if a
homosexual who wants to renounce homosexuality finds a psychiatrist who
knows how to cure homosexuality, he has every chance of becoming a happy,
well-adjusted, heterosexual."³⁸⁸ Reuben characterized all homosexual males as
promiscuous, pathological perverts whose "primary interest is the penis, not the
person."³⁸⁹ They were, according to Rueben, incapable of forming intimate,
stable relationships. Reuben told readers that the homosexual "thrives on danger
. . . for reasons he doesn't understand himself."³⁹⁰ He offered an explanation:
they were searching futilely for the one penis that would satisfy them. This was
a paradox, according to Reuben, since a man could only be truly satisfied by a
vagina. He told readers that homosexual encounters were prone to violence,
and although murder was "exceptional -- assault, robbery, and blackmail" were
common offshoots of homosexual affairs.³⁹¹ Reuben went on to describe
homosexual relations and social interactions in the same fashion, typecasting all
homosexual men as perverse and pathetic: out of control, recklessly
promiscuous, and incapable of intimacy.

Lesbians did not garner near as much attention as male homosexuals, to
whom Reuben dedicated an entire chapter, but Reuben's analysis of female
homosexuality was equally insensitive: the only references to lesbianism
appeared in a chapter on prostitution. Reuben stated that "the majority of
prostitutes are female homosexuals in their private lives,"³⁹² so they normally
had no trouble accommodating lesbian clients. He detailed the manner in which

³⁸⁷ Reuben, Everything You Always Wanted to Know, 130.
³⁸⁸ Reuben, Everything You Always Wanted to Know, 132.
³⁸⁹ Reuben, Everything You Always Wanted to Know, 133.
³⁹⁰ Reuben, Everything You Always Wanted to Know, 132-133.
³⁹¹ Reuben, Everything You Always Wanted to Know, 134.
³⁹² Reuben, Everything You Always Wanted to Know, 217.
lesbians engaged in sexual relations, citing the absence of a penis as a major obstacle to overcome. Mutual masturbation, oral sex, and the use of dildoes served as the most common forms of sexual interaction between women, he noted, and it seemed to suffice for them. He offered the testimonial of one lesbian prostitute who claimed she actually preferred females:

Only a woman knows how to make love to another woman. I can do more for a girl with my tongue in fifteen minutes than a man can do for her in fifteen years. I should know -- I've let 50,000 men lay me since I started and I wouldn't trade one of my girls for all of them!

Lesbians clearly threatened masculinity. Reuben acknowledged that lesbians differed from male homosexuals. Girls "made out more than boys," a reflection of the "female desire for at least the illusion of romance in sexual involvement," as compared to "most gay guys" who "just want to hurry up and get down to the business of masturbation." Female homosexual relationships tended to last longer, but were "no less stormy," because the girls tended to "betray and deceive each other with monotonous regularity." Reuben never made a distinction between prostitution and lesbian relationships, leaving the reader with the impression that all lesbians were sexual deviants who engaged in some form of sex for pay, however much they might enjoy it. Male and female homosexuals alike were characterized as social deviants whose perverse sexual behavior was just one manifestation of a generally pathological, antisocial, and troubled psychological profile.

Reuben's analysis of homosexuality read like a tract from an era well before the sexual revolution. However, his book was not received as a

393 Reuben, Everything You Always Wanted to Know, 218-219.
394 Reuben, Everything You Always Wanted to Know, 219.
395 Reuben, Everything You Always Wanted to Know, 219.
396 Reuben, Everything You Always Wanted to Know, 219.
conservative or reactionary publication, which makes his analysis even more disturbing. On the contrary, Reuben's advice regarding heterosexual behavior was quite progressive and liberal; his book was championed as being liberating. In his introduction, he berated the lack of information about sex education available in schools. He claimed that a veneer of prudishness continued to tarnish the sexual revolution, resulting in a sort of guilty fascination with sex. Although most Americans had the freedom to experiment sexually, most had too little information or too many inhibitions to fully realize their sexual potential. He stated, "The purpose of this book is to tell the reader what he wants to know and what he needs to know to achieve the greatest possible degree of sexual satisfaction," suggesting that he was perhaps targeting men rather than women. He further remarked, "In spite of the shrill denials of professional moralists, it is obvious that human beings were designed by their Creator to copulate." Rueben warned that "Those whose sexual behavior is shrouded in ignorance and circumscribed with fear, have little chance of finding happiness in their short years on this planet." He intended his book to eradicate the last vestiges of America's Puritanical roots and reassure middle-class Americans that it was permissible, if not essential, to embrace their sexuality and shed their unhealthy hang-ups about sex.

Regarding the sexual potential of women, he claimed that women had almost limitless capacities for orgasm. Citing a recent investigation in which a female subject was videotaped having sex with a parade of male "volunteers," Reuben reported that after 50 climaxes, everyone except the woman was ready to end the experiment, favoring dinner over furthering the cause of scientific advancement. He noted that "anxious wives" called their husbands at the

397 Reuben, Everything You Always Wanted to Know, 3.
398 Reuben, Everything You Always Wanted to Know, 4.
laboratory, but the female subject was "more or less willing," described as "tired but happy." The nonchalant manner in which Reuben recounted the experiment suggested that this was a rather acceptable practice, even as he hinted that the experiments involved married men. His work fully supported and encouraged an embracing of female sexuality.

On the controversial topic of abortion, Reuben's advice seemed quite broad-minded. He noted that women with money could obtain a safe and relatively simple abortion from a doctor regardless of where she lived. In states with very strict abortion laws she might have to travel, but any woman with money could effectively end her pregnancy safely and easily. The entire ordeal, however, could cost from one thousand to two thousand dollars. He noted quite sympathetically that, in contrast, poor women had very limited options: "That unfortunate lady must then travel around the corner into the Dark Ages. Society has turned its back on her and everything she does from that moment on will be a crime." Although Reuben's goal was to remain objective, his presentation of the plight of poor women read as stridently in favor of legalized abortion. He recounted the story of a twenty-three-year-old typist named Ginny whose boyfriend impregnated her and then disappeared. She fell victim to an illegal abortionist who also requested sexual favors from her. Ginny fared better than many women, he claimed, in that she recovered from her infection and had no permanent damage. However, she was sexually abused and then charged $400 for a "horrendous version of an operation that would have cost a Swedish or Japanese girl about $25 -- with a well-trained doctor in a spotless modern hospital."
David Reuben became a minor celebrity as a result of the book. Excerpts from his book concerning impotence, birth control, abortion, and the impact of aging on sexuality showed up in *Ladies Home Journal*.\(^{403}\) *McCalls* featured him as a monthly advice columnist. In his July 1970 column, Reuben discussed the need to temper sexual freedom with responsibility.\(^{404}\) With the acceptance of female libido and premarital sex, sexual freedom required "individual responsibility for individual behavior."\(^{405}\) He noted that women had been prevented from embracing their libido for over five hundred years, and that it was now time to free their inhibitions about sex along with outdated law codes. "It's nobody's business," he claimed, "what an American adult does in his or her own home -- with another (consenting) adult, of course." He advocated the repeal of "outmoded and punitive criminal laws against abortion, adultery, fornication, and even masturbation."\(^{406}\) He said nothing, however, about challenging laws against homosexuality.

His attitudes provided a barometer of the prevailing morality codes of middle-class Americans in the early Seventies. Reuben's treatment of abortion prefigured the *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973, and his celebration of the female libido was in step with the sentiments of mainstream Americans. The book fully supported premarital sex, made no distinction between married or unmarried people in its descriptions of sexual behavior, and did not moralize about promiscuity for heterosexuals. In fact, Reuben was quite generous in his analysis of Ginny, the typist, whose pregnancy was due to a one night stand. He never questioned her morality or suggested that she was irresponsible for not using

\(^{403}\) Dr. David Reuben, M.D., "Everything you always wanted to know about sex,*" *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1970, 50-51.


\(^{405}\) Reuben, "Sexual Conflicts," 27.

\(^{406}\) Reuben, "Sexual Conflicts," 27.
birth control. He promoted safe, legal abortions and even hinted that they should be subsidized by the government. In short, he championed all the goals of feminism except lesbian rights. His analysis of homosexuals, then, presumably indicated the prevailing sentiments about lesbians and gay men in America in the early 1970s. Additionally, his stature as a respected expert in the area of sex undoubtedly influenced Americans' opinions about homosexuals and furthered the notion that homosexuality was a "disease."

Given Americans' reluctance to extend the sexual revolution to homosexuals, the linking of women's rights to lesbianism worked to push middle-of-the-road Americans and even some liberals away from the feminist label. Moreover, antisexual attitudes, androgynous fashion, militant separatism, and the unfeminine behaviors characteristic of radical feminists and radical lesbian-feminists were conflated in the media with the notion of equality for women. The radical feminists' attack on the objectification of women on some levels furthered the construction of a hypersexualized and feminine archetype of American womanhood in the 1970s — if only to distance women from lesbian-feminists, who gave conservatives an easy target to attack. By the early 1970s, tempers on the Left and the Right had reached a boiling point, polarizing society. If radicals attacked Miss America, conservatives would come to her defense. If women's liberationists championed Plath, conservative women attacked her work. Even icons of the feminist movement like Betty Friedan criticized the excesses of racial feminists and lesbians and their assaults on female sexuality. Friedan worked to steer press perceptions of the mainstream movement away from the radical agenda in hopes of salvaging the more moderate goals of feminism.

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In an article in the August 1972 edition of *McCalls*, "Beyond Women's Liberation," Friedan warned that radical feminists had alienated both men and women, inviting a backlash that threatened the goals of the women's rights movement just as progress was being realized.\(^{407}\) She recounted stories of women -- young and middle-aged alike -- proudly proclaiming that they had left their husbands and children in the name of women's liberation. Sisterhood, she claimed, could be carried too far. She attacked the underlying assumptions of radical feminism, namely the notion that women were morally superior "victims" and that men were all "oppressors." Applying Marxist rhetoric of class warfare to male-female relationships and casting all men as oppressors proved detrimental and offensive:

As a woman, I object to female chauvinism -- not only because it is dangerous, but because it is wrong. Just as it is wrong to denigrate women as a class by defining them as sex objects, it is also wrong to elevate women as a class by yet another sexual definition, one that distorts a concrete fact of human life -- female sexuality -- into an abstract ideology.\(^{408}\)

Further, Friedan cautioned that positioning men as the enemy disillusioned not only men but women as well:

Female chauvinism denies us full humanity as women in another way, too, one that threatens backlash among women even more than men. Those that would make an abstract ideology out of sex, aping the old-fashioned rhetoric of class warfare or the separatist extremist of race warfare, paradoxically deny the concert reality of women's sexuality, mundane or glorious, burden or pleasure, exaggerated or repressed, as it has been in the past.\(^{409}\)

Friedan criticized Gloria Steinem for equating marriage to prostitution, asserting

\(^{408}\) Friedan, "Beyond Women's Liberation," 83.
\(^{409}\) Friedan, "Beyond Women's Liberation," 83.
that such statements deflected support of many women for the moderate goals of feminism. Asking women to deny their sexuality or to give up the desire for a loving husband and a family "denies the real feelings of too many women."410

Friedan also explained that many men friendly to the movement were fast becoming its enemies. Women appeared to be hypocrites, wanting the best of both worlds, and men were paying the price. One wealthy woman bragged about her brave exodus from married life yet confessed that her husband still supported her.411 One of Friedan's male friends increasingly questioned his commitment to the movement because he paid $17,500 a year in alimony to his first wife, shared responsibility for his children, and split household chores with his second wife. The ultimate liberated man, he grew weary of the male-bashing which lumped him into the culpable class of "male" with all its pejorative connotations. Friedan noted that "he shows much greater support and respect for his new wife's professional work than she for his."412 However, his wife failed to appreciate it. He told Friedan:

I'm sick and tired of always being treated like an enemy, a brute, no matter what I do. I want a woman who really likes me. My first wife had to like me, because she was dependent on me. That didn't count.413

He then mentioned a recent book he had read in which a man left his wife and children for a carefree life in Pago Pago, a book which was advertised as the story of a man who "had to stop being a husband so he could get back to being a man." Friedan's liberated friend remarked, "Maybe Pago Pago is carrying it too far, but impotence is the masculine backlash."414

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410 Friedan, "Beyond Women's Liberation," 83.
411 Friedan, "Beyond Women's Liberation," 82.
412 Friedan, "Beyond Women's Liberation," 135.
413 Friedan, "Beyond Women's Liberation," 135.
This man's confession may have struck fear in the hearts of American women immersed since childhood in messages about the importance of sexuality, sex appeal, and the orgasmic potential of females. Maybe radical lesbian-feminists could live in a world of impotent men, but average American women certainly could not. Friedan closed her article with a warning about the growing backlash. She encouraged women to continue fighting for an ERA, equal pay, and all other reasonable goals of feminism. She also told the radicals: "I feel that the women's liberation movement has had enough of sexual politics." In closing, she remarked, "It's time to leave behind as dinosaurs, or isolate as lethal freaks, male chauvinist pigs and female chauvinist boors alike."415

Six months later, Friedan's predictions seemed to be coming true. In another article for *McCalls* in the January 1973 issue, "We Don't Have To Be That Independent," an exhausted Friedan described her frustration in combating the growing animosity toward the women's movement.416 As she prepared to read a stack of letters sent in response to her August 1972 article in *McCalls*, she confessed:

I don't feel like going to the NOW board meeting or the Policy Council of the Political Caucus: I am sick of fighting the power brokers and manipulators of the women's movement, I am even sick of trying to explain to the endless reporters our real differences in ideology and direction.417

However, Friedan reported that she felt reinvigorated as she started to read the letters from *McCalls* readers. Many readers shared Friedan's frustration with the radical elements of the feminist movement and had moved away from support of the movement. One woman lamented that in seeking fulfillment, "I had pushed away the very 'male shoulder' I had come to lean on in times of need."

417 Friedan, "We Don't Have to Be That Independent, 18.
Another told Friedan that the "new dialogue" she sparked within the movement had helped her to "clear up the many contradictions I've been battling within myself." Friedan claimed that the majority of letters indicated that:

many women and men who now support the goals of equality for women will be (or have already been) alienated by the rhetoric of sex-class warfare, especially the young who are already breaking through the old mystiques of masculinity and femininity.

Friedan reported that two respected women writers had come out strongly against the movement. Joan Didion berated the women's movement for being anti-family and anti-sexual: "Increasingly it seemed that the aversion was to adult sexual life itself." Midge Decter's book, *The New Chastity and Other Arguments Against Women's Liberation*, attacked the movement on the grounds that it was "antisexual, antichildbreading, anti-housework, anti-individual, and anti-freedom." Interestingly, women criticized the movement for being not only anti-family but also antisexual, indicating that while the feminist label was fast becoming unfashionable, the released sexuality of the sexual revolution had retained its relevance. As further evidence of the backlash, Friedan cited a recent march for women's equality in New York, where only five thousand marchers showed up, compared to the twenty thousand men, women, and children who had supported the rally during the previous two years. Contributing to the backlash against radical feminism herself, Friedan complained that "Radical lesbians and other adherents of class warfare took over the march, alienating suburban housewives, workingwomen, welfare mothers, churchwomen, Junior

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418 Friedan, “We Don’t Have to Be That Independent, 21.
419 Friedan, “We Don’t Have to Be That Independent, 21.
420 Joan Didion, as quoted in Friedan, “We Don’t Have to Be That Independent, 21.
421 Friedan, “We Don’t Have to Be That Independent,” 21.
Leaguers and high-school girls who had previously joined the force in unprecedented numbers.422

Friedan ultimately urged women to continue supporting the movement, reassuring them that it was fine to embrace their roles as nurturing wives and mothers while also supporting women's equality. She stated, "We must continue to spell out clearly that it's not necessary to turn your back on husband, children, home or even the beauty parlor to be a liberated women."423 Betty Friedan, who had in 1963 awakened the world to the fact that women were unwitting victims of advertising and marketing, chalk-eating prisoners of Madison Avenue's "sexual sell," now told women to embrace their femininity. At this critical juncture in the women's rights movement, with the ratification of the ERA close at hand and reproductive freedom almost secured, Friedan desperately tried to keep mainstream American women from turning against the movement. Her conservative opponents, however, seized the moment and the momentum with an antifeminism campaign that made Friedan's attack on radical feminism seem tame by comparison.

Phyllis Schlafly, a lawyer and conservative author who gained fame by writing a book in support of Barry Goldwater's nomination during the 1964 presidential election, became the most vocal and influential antifeminist in America. In "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?" she outlined the premise of her national "Stop ERA" campaign. Schlafly argued against equal rights on the grounds that women already enjoyed a status of "special privilege" in American society; thus, the ERA would diminish certain protections afforded

422 Friedan, "We Don't Have to Be That Independent," 147.
423 Friedan, "We Don't Have to Be That Independent," 147.
women and saddle them with more responsibilities. Although her argument centered around women's equality, the broader context of her attack on women's liberation stemmed from her defense of capitalism and American values. Although she had six children, Schlafly herself had become an accomplished professional who did not object to women's advancement in the workplace. She made this distinction clear:

Many women are under the mistaken impression that "women's lib" means more job employment opportunities for women, equal pay for equal work, appointments of women to high positions, admitting more women to medical schools, and other desirable objectives which all women favor. We all support these purposes, as well as any necessary legislation which would bring them about.

But this is only the sweet syrup which covers the deadly poison masquerading as "women's lib." The women's libbers are radicals who are waging a total assault on the family, on marriage, and on children. Don't take my word for it -- read their own literature and prove to yourself what these characters are trying to do.

In her essay, Schlafly lauded the American social, cultural, and economic institutions which she claimed were responsible for the high standard of living for American women. "Of all the classes of people who ever lived," stated Schlafly, "the American woman is the most privileged." She praised America's Judeo-Christian philosophical roots and the practice of chivalry for the exalted status of women in American society. A man in America worked countless hours to purchase a "diamond for his bride" and a "home for her to live in," and often labored overtime to "buy a fur piece or other finery." Schlafly indicated her bias toward the American way in the following passage, demonstrating that

426 Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Right's for Women," 209.
much of the Right's attack on feminism was part of a larger rift in American society:

In other civilizations, such as the African and the American Indian, the men strut around wearing feathers and beads and hunting and fishing (great sport for men!), while the women do all the hard, tiresome drudgery including the tilling of the soil (if any is done), the hewing of wood, the making of fires, the carrying of water, as well as the cooking, sewing, and caring for babies. 427

In American society, she claimed, the acceptance of family as the basic unit of society worked to the benefit of women, as evidenced in dower rights and community property law,428 and in alimony and child support legislation in which "the man is always required to support his wife and each child he caused to be brought into the world."429 The ERA, she threatened, would rid women of these special protections, force them into the workplace, and allow men who divorce their wives to "sell the family home, spend the money on his girl friend or gamble it away" without interference from his "faithful wife of 30 years."430

Finally, Schlafly praised the American free enterprise system and its "remarkable inventors who have lifted the backbreaking 'women's work' from our shoulders." Citing inventors like Thomas Edison, Elias Howe, Clarence Birdseye, and Henry Ford as the real architects of women's liberation,431 she claimed that the American woman had the best of all possible worlds. She was free to take a part-time or full time job or to "indulge to her heart's content in a tremendous selection of interesting educational or cultural homemaking

427 Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Right's for Women," 209.
429 Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Right's for Women," 212.
431 Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Right's for Women," 211. She credited Edison with electricity, and by extension, most electric labor-saving devices. Howe invented the sewing machine and by extension was responsible for store-bought clothing. Birdseye gave America frozen food and Ford provided mass-production and an affordable vehicle.

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activities. She again compared American women to women in other societies who spent all day and most of the night in true domestic slavery. She further asserted, "The claim that American women are downtrodden and unfairly treated is the fraud of the century. The truth is that American women never had it so good. Why should we lower ourselves to 'equal rights' when we already have the status of special privilege?"

In addition to a broad assault on the women's liberation movement in generally, Schlafly attacked Ms. magazine's premier Spring 1972 issue. She considered the issue "anti-family, anti-children, and pro-abortion," "a series of sharp-tongued, high-pitched, whining complaints by unmarried women" who view "home as prison, and the wife and mother as slave." She demeaned one article which encouraged women to write marriage contracts because it "lauds a women's refusal to carry up the family laundry as 'an act of extreme courage.'" She pointedly advertised that another article "tells how satisfying it is to be a lesbian." Her alignment of women's liberation to lesbianism in a generally homophobic society helped further to alienate average American women from the feminist movement.

It is evident throughout Schlafly's essay that the issue of women's equality had become deeply enmeshed in a broader conflict raging between the political Right and Left in American society. Schlafly blatantly ignored the plight of families in poverty, single mothers with no source of support, or women whose husbands could not provide for them in marriage, let alone in the event of divorce. In Schlafly's America, there simply were no poor people, no abused women, no victims of sexual assault. The status of the American woman she

432 Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Right's for Women," 211.
433 Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Right's for Women," 212.
434 Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Right's for Women," 213.
praised applied only to a select number of elite "faithful" housewives who lived lives of relative luxury and wanted to maintain their standard of living in the event of divorce without being forced to enter the workplace. The main threat to their status quo was marital infidelity resulting in abandonment. This demographic segment of American women, however, wielded a great deal of political power and formed a core component of Ronald Reagan's constituency in the 1980 presidential election. Her message also affected a growing number of housewives concerned about the growing number of single, sexually liberated, and financially independent women who threatened their way of life. Indeed, Schlafly made sure to cite the opinion of a New York University professor who encouraged men to champion the women's liberation movement. She summarized his argument as follows:

His argument is that men should eagerly look forward to the day when they can enjoy free sex and not have to pay for it. The husband will no longer be "saddled with the tremendous guilt feelings" when he leaves his wife with nothing after she has given him her best years. If a husband loses his job, he will no longer be compelled to take any job just to support his family. A husband can "go out with the boys" to have a drink without feeling guilty. Alimony will be eliminated.435

For American women already obsessed with their sex appeal, the idea of men abandoning them with impunity for sexually liberated women was frightening. Although many of Schlafly's claims proved to be oversimplified and sensationalist, by the mid-1970s her campaign against the ERA brought the momentum of ratification to a halt. In June 1982, the ERA deadline for ratification passed three states short of the requisite number for ratification.436

Moreover, Schlafly's efforts further spurred on the formidable backlash against

feminism, and the Stop ERA campaign galvanized conservative women and men seeking to reverse the liberal trends of the 1960s and early 1970s. In effect, the debate about women's issues and the heightened emotions of zealots on the Right and the Left forced many women to make a choice between embracing or rejecting the entire feminist agenda. As the feminist label became associated with lesbianism, antisexual attitudes, and unfeminine behaviors, many average American women abandoned the quest for equality. However, American women continued to embrace their personal sexual freedom and increasingly saw their sexuality as a source of power over men.

Although the ERA debate fragmented the women's movement, it did not eclipse it. Ms. magazine's premier issue in Spring 1972 was a smashing success, although its popularity was shortlived. The premier issue sold over 300,000 copies. It featured articles about such diverse issues as sisterhood, marriage, family, black feminism, relationships, child care centers, and welfare. Although extremely biased, Schlafly's analysis of the issue was not entirely off the mark. The issue did contain an article about lesbianism and another by Susan Edmiston entitled "How to Write Your Own Marriage Contract," which advised women on how to balance the responsibilities of home and family for a two-career couple. The article documented how some couples wrote "contracts" that while not necessarily legally binding nonetheless provided a blueprint for a more egalitarian marriage among proponents of women's liberation. Through such arrangements, men willingly shared more of the responsibilities for the home, and the "contracts" seemed to be working well for modern couples. Curiously, one woman mentioned that the hardest part of their arrangement stemmed from her reluctance to give up control of the domestic sphere to her husband.
She learned that during his time with their daughter she needed to allow him to parent in his own way.437

In an article called "Can Women Love Women?" Anne Koedt presented a series of interviews with self-proclaimed feminist lesbians. Koedt deconstructed the notion that female homosexuality was a consequence of male behavior. Rather than articulating how "satisfying it is to be a lesbian," as Schlafly contended, Koedt interviewed lesbian lovers who disclosed the nature of their attraction to each other and positioned it as natural and biological rather than as a consequence of being "unsuccessful with male lovers or with male society in general." However, the lesbian label was a powerful deterrent for women, a scarlet "L" branded by the media on the feminist movement for all to see. In an article in the November 1973 issue of Mademoiselle, for example, Karen Durbin took on the issue of feminism and lesbianism in her regular column, "The Intelligent Women's Guide to Sex."438 Admitting that she and a friend of hers had both been dubbed lesbians at one time or another because of their membership in feminist organizations, she blamed the antifeminists for using the label to prey on people's ignorance and alienate women from the movement. They were, she argued, attempting to "undermine the legitimacy of the feminist claim" by "undermining the women making it." Even though, according to Durbin, most Americans by 1973 embraced the goals of feminism, the idea that "the feminist impulse reflects a quirk of sexuality, whether desire for women or hostility toward men -- lingers on." She did admit that some extreme women in the movement were lesbians who harbored a deep resentment of men. "Then," she noted, "there are the rest of us, women who could not properly be called

lesbians or man-haters, but for whom lesbianism and man-hating are the extremes of something that is common to our experience as feminists. The lesbian and man-hating labels attached to feminism caused women to distance themselves from feminism, and Durbin hoped to remedy that to some degree.

The article in Ms.'s premier issue that perhaps more than any other delineated the feminists' position on sex was "The Sexual Revolution Wasn't Our War" by Anselma Dell'Olio. She blatantly asserted that the sexual revolution hurt rather than helped women in their quest for independence and liberation. In her article, she declared that, according to men, "a liberated woman was one who put out sexually at the drop of a suggestive comment, who didn't demand marriage, and who 'took care of herself' as far as contraceptives." She argued that the sexual revolution "liberated women only from the right to say 'no' to sexual intercourse with men," and "destroyed the sanctity of maidenhood." She further put forth that "the Sexual Revolution and the Women's Movement are polar opposites in philosophy, principles, goals, and spirit." Moreover, "the achilles' heel" of the revolution, she claimed, was the "persistent male ignorance of the female orgasm."

In summarizing the debate about female orgasm from Freud to Kinsey, she presented the findings of Masters and Johnson who once and for all rejected the dichotomy between the clitoral and vaginal orgasm: there was only one center of women's pleasure, they claimed, and that was the clitoris. Further, all women were multi-orgasmic, but women's orgasms varied greatly in intensity.

439 Durbin, 122.
441 Dell'Olio, 104.
442 Dell'Olio, 104.
443 Dell'Olio, 105.
She lamented that even the abundance of information supporting the orgasmic potential of women had not resulted in better sex for the majority of women, mainly because all the scientific jargon could not provide the emotional component of a satisfying sexual experience. She explained that women needed to reconstruct their relationships with men on equal terms and develop equal partnerships in romance if the sexual revolution were to have any meaning at all.

Women needed to stop entering relationships in a misguided attempt to attain security and validity. She contended that "a sexually liberated woman without a feminist consciousness is nothing more than a new variety of prostitute for the Sexual Revolution." 444 Moreover, many women were not achieving the sexual bliss they read about in sex manuals and reduced themselves to faking orgasm so as not to disappoint their partner. She cautioned women against this since it gave men unreal expectations of women's sexual potential, which only compounded the problem. "A man with some respect for himself and you will not be turned off by your honesty," 445 she claimed. She also encouraged women to masturbate and learn how to give themselves pleasure so that they might better instruct their men. Women faked orgasms for fear of being labeled frigid, a condition which many claimed to be castrating for men. Not only were women responsible for their own lack of orgasmic potential, they were also the cause of male impotence. Dell'Olio likewise took issue with the backlash against sexually assertive women: "We are accused of demanding orgasms like spoiled children demanding sweets before dinner. Men are never accused of the same." 446

Overall, Dell'Olio's article was somewhat acerbic and hinted that women

444 Dell'Olio, 109.
445 Dell'Olio, 109.
446 Dell'Olio, 110.
could achieve more sexual satisfaction without men: this was a tough pill for most American women to swallow. Ironically, many of her concerns about the rise in promiscuity and the negative impact of the sexual revolution on women were shared by Phyllis Schlafly and the organization she represented. Had either side been able to see beyond its own political agenda, it might have been possible for these political opponents to work together to address the issue and stall women from resorting to a dangerously sensual representation of female power. Rather, women and girls were somewhat trapped by the polarization of society that ensued in the 1970s as the culture wars on the Right and the Left gained momentum. Once again, females were caught in the crossfire of wider issues in American society, and the fallout proved particularly brutal for young women and girls dealing with overwhelming peer pressure and powerful cultural messages encouraging them to adopt liberated attitudes toward sex.

Advertisers quickly exploited the women's liberation movement as well as the growing economic power of women. Liberated women, advertisers assumed, would make better consumers. Starting in 1969, advertisers shifted strategy, moving away from sexist stereotypes and toward a new, liberated prototype. Virginia Slims, for example, launched its famous campaign with the tagline "You've come a long way, baby." However, the trend in advertising helped to contain the very women it presumably liberated, this time involving them in a never-ending quest for physical perfection. Advertising campaigns positioned women as narcissistic consumers. Ironically, feminine hygiene products became symbols of liberation.447 A two-page spread for Pristine Feminine Hygiene Deodorant, appearing in the July 1970 issue of McCall's, opened with the headline "Angie Dickenson talks about woman's new freedom."

The copy mainly consisted of an interview with Dickenson that has nothing to do with the product until the very end. Insightful quotations are set off in bold, "A bored woman is a boring woman -- especially to her husband;" "Oh, no, it doesn't fulfill me at all to lug a bag of groceries;" and finally, "I think freedom is great if you know how to handle it." In the last copy block, at the end of the two-page spread next to a shot of the product, came the pitch:

Knowing how to handle your new freedom includes knowing how to keep yourself completely feminine all day --- all night. Knowing how to stay free from even the slightest embarrassing vaginal odor. Knowing, in short, about Pristeen Feminine Hygiene Deodorant Spray.

Sexual liberation for women brought new anxieties and new opportunities to exploit for revenue. A Virginia Slims ad in the same issue featured a sexy, long-legged beauty smoking an equally thin cigarette. Comparing her to the flapper of yesteryear, on whose image she was superimposed, the headline read: "You've come a long way, baby." The copy sought to diminish women even as the visual image objectified them, calling them "baby" and linking empowerment to smoking cigarettes rather than to advancement in the public sphere. An Olga Bras ad in the February 1971 issue of Mademoiselle featured a sexy woman strewn across the page in her undergarments with this headline splashed overhead, "Are you the girl who said you wanted freedom now? Olga designs Freedom Front." A Revlon make-up ad in the same issue teased the sexy yet assertive woman eyeing the camera; "Apply yourself," it proclaimed, suggesting that the ad might be about something more salient than cosmetics. The ad then mocked her aspirations in the text, which highlighted the need for

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448 Pristeen Feminine Hygiene Deodorant Spray advertisement, appearing in McCall's, July 1970.
449 Pristeen Feminine Hygiene Deodorant Spray advertisement, appearing in McCall's, July 1970.
450 Virginia Slims advertisement, appearing in McCall's, July 1970.
make-up: "cheekbones, forehead, freckledeck, chin, tip of nose, earlobes, swanny throat, bosom and/or environs, etc. etc. etc." These advertisements and others like them told women that, although they were liberated, they had better use some of their new economic power on their appearance. Liberation-themed advertisements did not eclipse traditional campaigns for beauty products and cleaning supplies, but they did add a new dimension to the changing notions of womanhood in the 1970s. They in effect set the tone for the increasingly unattainable images of beauty in the 1980s and 1990s that would increase with computer-assisted magazine photographs, body doubles in films, and a dramatic increase in plastic surgery.

Average American women of all political persuasions, however suspicious of the feminist label they had become by the mid-1970s, remained concerned about their sex lives, their appearance, and their relationships with men, in no small part due to the efforts of advertisers and the impact of the media. Women also worried about the reported growing epidemic of impotency among American men, which Betty Friedan had mentioned in her *McCalls* article. In the April 1973 edition of *McCalls*, Linda Wolfe addressed this phenomenon in "When Men Lose Interest in Sex." She recounted the story of a couple that had this problem. Ironically, the woman had, at her husband's request, availed herself of the widely available literature on sex to increase her pleasure in hopes of prompting more frequent sexual encounters. Her enthusiasm actually proved to be a turn-off for him, and he was not alone. According to a study by a group of New York psychiatrists, there was a trend toward increasing impotency in men.

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that coincided with an increased desire in women. Many people blamed women for being too demanding about their orgasmic rights. 455

Wolfe posited that perhaps men were simply being put on the spot more often, thus exposing the limits to their potency that had existed all along. Women, the article counseled, needed to choose their words carefully when asking for sex in order to appear willing but not demanding. 456 Women's liberation, she noted, had changed the dynamic regarding sex, but had not gone far enough. Sex had transformed from being an act men did "to" women into an act that men did "for" women due to women's liberation: now sex needed to become an activity they did "with" women. 457

The sexual revolution affected conservatives as well as liberals. The best-selling book of 1974 was Marabel Morgan's *The Total Woman: How to Make Your Marriage Come Alive*, a book designed to teach married women how to rekindle the flames of romance and sexual bliss in their marriages. 458 Morgan, a former beauty queen and friend of conservative activist and celebrity Anita Bryant, published the book as a follow-up to a series of seminars she offered in her local area where she shared the method which had revived her own failing marriage. Her seminars proved so popular she decided to publish her recipe for marital bliss, finding a market even larger than she herself had imagined existed. Morgan's book was not entirely about sex, but sexual relations were given a great deal of treatment. Moreover, good sex was lauded as the most important component of a harmonious marriage. *The Total Woman* was in fact a bizarre hybrid of a 1950s marital advice book and a 1970s sex manual.

455 Wolfe, 32.
456 Wolfe, 33.
457 Wolfe, 36.
Conservatism pervaded the book, laced as it was with quotations from Biblical scripture. Unlike The Sensuous Woman, which made no distinction between married and unmarried couples, The Total Woman was expressly reserved for married couples. Chapters like "Accept Him," "Admire Him," "Adapt to Him," and "Appreciate Him" taught women how to use their feminine charms to open channels of communication and return harmony to the marriage. She cautioned against excessive nagging, citing her own marriage as a case study, because it turned her from wife into mother: "there was no way he could feel romantic toward his second mother." She cautioned women to accept their husband's faults because "God accepts us as we are." Men needed to be admired, she stated, citing the Bible's directive to "hold him in reverence." If men acted cold and distant, she suggested flattering them and building up their egos. She encouraged women to submit to their husbands' leadership and adapt to their way of life, suggesting that women forego the notions of liberation and fulfillment. God, she claimed, ordained the hierarchy, and marital harmony would never be forthcoming if women did not accept this fact. "Men and women," she asserted, "although equal in status, are different in function." As if anticipating criticism, she noted that "the Total Woman is not a slave," because she is choosing her own path: she was the queen, but he was the king. Morgan admitted that often men would make bad decisions, but a "Total Woman" was advised simply to let him make the mistake rather than challenge his authority. Otherwise, she may win the battle but lose the war, resulting in a

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459 Marabel Morgan, 54.
460 Marabel Morgan, 57.
461 Marabel Morgan, 65.
462 Marabel Morgan, 78-82.
463 Marabel Morgan, 82.
464 Marabel Morgan, 82.
marriage fraught with conflict, devoid of romance, and in some cases ending in divorce.\textsuperscript{465}

Morgan’s book did not actively seek to return women to the home; rather, Morgan assumed that her readers were housewives. She did not challenge the notion of women working outside the home, she simply targeted her message to those women who considered homemaking their primary responsibility. The popularity of her book suggested that by the mid-1970s, regardless of the options afforded women through the gains of the women’s rights movement and feminism, American women’s desire for a stable marriage and family endured. Her advice on how to send off husbands in the morning and how to greet them at night clearly positioned housewives as being in competition with available single women in the workplace:

Many a husband rushes off to work leaving his wife slumped over a cup of coffee in her grubby undies. His once sexy bride is now wrapped in rollers and smells like bacon and eggs. All day long he’s surrounded at the office by dazzling secretaries who emit clouds of perfume.\textsuperscript{466}

She encouraged housewives to embrace the sexual revolution fully lest their men give into temptation. Women, she reported, were not enjoying sex with their husbands, and the decrease in sexual excitement within marriage was a primary cause of marital discord. "One of your husband’s most basic needs," she reported, "is for you to be physically attractive to him." Morgan asked, "Will he be star-struck by the way you look tonight?" She counseled women to meet and greet their husbands looking sexually attractive, advising them to look more like a mistress than a wife. In a subhead entitled "costume party," Morgan recounted the night she surprised her husband Charlie by dressing in pink baby-

\textsuperscript{465} Marabel Morgan, 82-84.
\textsuperscript{466} Marabel Morgan, 111-112.
doll pajamas and white boots after soaking in a bubble-bath. She happily revealed that her normally reserved husband "took one look, dropped his briefcase, and chased her around the dinner table," eventually leaving them "breathless with that old feeling of romance."\textsuperscript{467} She explained that costumes and role-playing were fun, exciting, and effective methods of quelling men's desire for variety which was usually quenched by infidelity. "Be a pixie or a pirate -- a cowgirl or a show girl. Keep him off guard."\textsuperscript{468} Regarding the obstacle of children, she advised the following:

You may not wish to parade around in nylon net at half-past five with your fifteen-year-old son all eyes. But the children will love your costumes. It makes life exciting. Can't you imagine Junior on the sandlot telling his friends, "I've got to go now, guys. Got to see Mom's outfit for tonight."

One son came home from college while his mother was taking the [Total Woman] course. He told her, "Mom, you look so cute lately. I hope I can find a woman like you for a wife."\textsuperscript{469}

Many women taking her course found success with the "costume party." When one Southern Baptist woman greeted her husband dressed only in "black mesh stockings, high heels, and an apron," he reportedly shouted "Praise the Lord!"\textsuperscript{470} The intertwining of religion and sexuality indicated that the religious right fully supported the sexual revolution inside the context of marriage, which included the imperative that women as well as men enjoy sex. However, Morgan reported that many women, regardless of the revolution, were not necessarily achieving sexual satisfaction. She quoted David Reuben who contended that it was mostly attitude that kept women from achieving orgasm. Almost all women had orgasmic potential, he claimed, but antiquated attitudes

\textsuperscript{467} Marabel Morgan, 116.
\textsuperscript{468} Marabel Morgan, 117.
\textsuperscript{469} Marabel Morgan, 118.
\textsuperscript{470} Marabel Morgan, 119-120.
toward sex prevented women from fulfilling it. This caused resentment within the marriage, a decline and disinterest in sex, and in some cases divorce. "Supersex," she reported, "is 20 percent education and 80 percent attitude."

Knowledge of sexual technique was not the problem, she claimed, since most couples were steeped in sex manuals and advice literature on the anatomy and physiology of sexual relations. Rather, a deep-seated negative attitude toward sex was the problem. Thus, Morgan reinterpreted Biblical scripture to conform to 1970s sensibilities: "That great source book, the Bible, states, 'Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled . . .' (15). In other words, sex is for the marriage relationship only, but within these bounds, anything goes."471 Morgan offered a caution from Dr. David Reuben for those who were still not convinced: "The wife who refuses to give her husband reasonable sexual satisfaction is literally asking him to go elsewhere."472

Morgan referred to sexual relationships throughout her book, and she also devoted one chapter, "Super Sex," entirely to the sexual relationship. Rather than advising women about their own anatomy and orgasmic potential, this chapter taught women to create sexual excitement, ambiance, and adventure within marriage. She advised women to be loving to and laudatory of their husbands. Regarding sex, she encouraged them to be exciting by changing the time of day or location, or perhaps creating a mood of anticipation by placing an erotic call to his office or tucking a note in his lunch box. She did not counsel women to be assertive regarding orgasm, perhaps in response to the growing concern that women's demands in the bedroom emasculated men. On the contrary, she advised the "total woman" to respond eagerly to her husband's sexual advances lest she bruise his male ego. She told women to be prepared for

471 Marabel Morgan, 141.
472 Dr. David Reuben, quoted in Marabel Morgan, 141.
sex every day of the week and never to refuse a man's sexual advances. Moreover, she suggested that women use sex to temper a man who may come home in a bad mood. She urged women not to become competitive with men at home or in bed. If they followed her prescription, sexual and marital bliss, she assured, would be forthcoming. She cited herself and many women like her as examples of happy "total women."473

Morgan's advice struck a chord with Americans in the mid-1970s because people of all political persuasions, ages, and sexual orientations were beginning to question the assumptions of the sexual revolution. The fact that a book written by an evangelical Christian was the best-selling non-fiction book of 1974 certainly suggested that the conservatives were winning converts. One assumption under assault was the notion that ridding America of its Puritanical hang-ups about sex would result in a more satisfying sexual experiences for Americans in general. Many Americans expressed concern that their sex lives did not measure up to the standards presented in sex manuals or in films. Rather than liberating Americans, fears of an "orgasm gap" permeated America's highly competitive society. Couples of all ages worried that their sexual experiences were not up to par. Young people in particular seemed confounded by the plethora of information about sex. More choices and more information about sex had not necessarily translated into better or more meaningful sexual relationships. In many instances, the sexual revolution created unhappiness and anxiety as couples fretted over the technique, frequency, and intensity of their encounters.

Teenagers and college students felt confused about and pressured by the sexual revolution, and that confusion grew more pronounced by the mid-1970s.

473 Marabel Morgan, 144-162.
A survey conducted by Mademoiselle and published in the February 1970 issue revealed that promiscuity was not as rampant in America as popular media images would suggest. Over forty-two of the respondents (aged eighteen to twenty-nine) reported that they were still virgins, and of the percentage that had engaged in premarital sex, only three percent had had sixteen or more partners.\footnote{474} A full seventy-six percent still valued marriage as a valid institution, even more so because women could now, due to the gains of feminism, marry for love rather than economic security or social pressure.\footnote{475}

Regardless, the pressure to conform to a new, liberated morality affected teenaged girls and young women. In its October 1971 issue, Seventeen published an article called "Is Virginity Outmoded?"\footnote{476} Authors Daniel A. Sugerman and Rollie Hochstein noted that teenage girls were the group most affected by the "New Morality." The number of boys who engaged in premarital sex had remained steady for the past twenty years, but the number of girls had dramatically increased. In the absence of a strict moral code regarding sexuality, the issue of premarital sex became a matter of personal choice. Rather than being liberating for young people, the choices were confusing.\footnote{477} Even the definition of virginity was highly contentious since many couples had been adopting an "everything but" mentality toward sex for decades. While some young women embraced sexual freedom and casual sex without emotional involvement, many others were less able to handle the emotional complications.\footnote{478} Stated the authors, "A young woman may think she is entering into a lighthearted passing experience, then later find herself caught up
in emotions she didn't anticipate. Furthermore, feelings of inadequacy infected teen sexual relations:

A strange reversal of attitude has taken place. A girl used to feel guilty if she felt she had gone out of bounds with one of her boy friends. Today, she is more likely to feel ashamed at her failure to respond sexually. Many girls in their mid-teens begin to act out passions that they don't feel, just to follow the trend.

In general, the article advised young women not to rush into sex simply to conform to peer pressure. It offered a mixed review on the impact of the sexual revolution. On the one hand, it had a positive ramifications in that it freed Americans from unnecessary guilt about sex. On the other hand, it threatened to cheapen the sexual experience. The authors argued that "the vast majority of American girls -- women's lib notwithstanding -- still wanted to get married and raise a family." Further, they told readers that "promiscuous girls are thoroughly mixed up," and they advised girls not to engage in premarital sex for the wrong reasons, noting "the power to choose carries with it the obligation to choose wisely."

In a similar vein, Time magazine in 1973 ran an article entitled "The Embarrassed Virgins." The article revealed that younger women and men who remained virginal felt compelled to hide their chastity. Young people who abstained from sex because they did not feel emotionally ready experienced overwhelming pressure to jump on the sexual bandwagon. Virginity was seen as decidedly uncool, as evidenced by one M.I.T. freshmen who confessed, "I don't even have a boyfriend. But I had myself fitted for a diaphragm. I had to feel that

479 Sugerman, 184.
480 Sugerman, 184.
481 Sugerman, 186.
482 "The Embarrassed Virgins," Time, July 9, 1973, 64.
in some way I was part of it all." Moreover, Time disclosed, "the [female] virgin may be suspected of frigidity or lesbianism," and young male virgins might "question their own potency or masculinity." Teens and college students exposed to pornographic films and sex manuals touting orgasmic bliss developed "superhuman expectations" regarding sex and were often disappointed when their initial experiences did not live up to expectations. An "orgasm lapse" often left young people, particularly girls, disappointed and frustrated.

However stupefied young Americans were about the sexual revolution, the fact that they talked about its shortcomings more openly indicated that a backlash had been set in motion. The backlash, however, targeted the fringe elements of promiscuous excess which arose in many ways because of the sensationalist manner in which the sexual revolution had been portrayed in the popular culture. Just as the Kinsey report had made public discussions of private sexual practices socially acceptable, public scrutiny of the sexual revolution fostered an acceptance of a more conservative attitude toward sex.

By the mid-1970s, mainstream publications weighed in on this debate. In November 1976, a Ladies' Home Journal article entitled "When Women Find Sex Disappointing" by Harriet La Barre exposed the fact that many women were not experiencing the sexual bliss they had been reading about for the last few years. La Barre revealed that many women felt like "sexual incompetents" comparing themselves to "the sexually liberated and enviably orgasmic woman we're always reading about." The root problem, she concluded, was not lack of

483 "The Embarrassed Virgins," 64.
484 "The Embarrassed Virgins," 64.
485 "The Embarrassed Virgins," 64.

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information about technique, but rather an overemphasis on the importance of the sex act compared to the overall relationship. In contrast to Morgan, La Barre contended that unspoken resentments in the relationship carried over into the bedroom. She remarked, however, that "the battles we fight in the bedroom are guerrilla battles -- the enemy hidden, masked, disguised. It looks like peace, not war." She cited lack of communication in the bedroom as a major cause of discord. For all the hype about liberation, most women still felt uncomfortable asking for what they wanted in bed. Furthermore, the sex manuals created performance anxiety about technique, which often stripped the experience of tenderness and spontaneity, essential ingredients in setting the romantic mood for the experience which most women needed.

Seeking to allay women's anxieties, the article maintained that fully fifty percent of all women could not in fact have orgasm during intercourse. Women, however, feared being labeled frigid if they did not produce the responses talked about in sex manuals. Women felt obligated to engage in new techniques or practices even if they were uncomfortable, forcing them to feign sexually sophisticated attitudes they were not quite ready to adopt lest they be labeled prudes:

To be called a prude is infinitely worse than frigid. To be frigid is some awful, inhibiting thing you got stuck with in defenseless childhood; presumably you couldn't help it; they (parents, religion, school, etc.) did you in. So frigidity at least rates some compassion, some tolerance. But prude? Prude implies a narrow primness that represents your very own, bigoted adult decision. Yet true sexual liberation means the freedom to say honestly what you don't want, as well as what you do. Who, then, is the bigot?

According to La Barre, Americans' obsession with sex created stress and unhappiness in the bedroom. An overemphasis on the importance of orgasm

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487 La Barre, 187.
488 La Barre, 187.
489 La Barre, 191-192.
and technique at the expense of intimacy fostered feelings of inadequacy and anxiety. Couples needed to realize that whatever worked for them was fine, regardless of what the manuals said and notwithstanding the cultural pressure to conform. Her analysis suggested that Americans had started to question the precepts of the sexual revolution.

Interestingly, in 1976, Ms. ran an article which echoed many of the same sentiments. In "Keeping Up with the Kinseys," Carol Tavis and T. George Harris reported that the pressure to achieve unrealistic levels of sexual bliss had caused problems between couples. Sex therapists reported that "today's upside-down Victorians worry about what they are not doing." Couples wanted "'better' sex or 'more' orgasms" simply because they assumed others were having them. The "orgasm gap" appeared to affect couples on both sides of the political spectrum. Setting the sexual revolution in the wider context of rising aspirations for personal fulfillment in the narcissistic Seventies, they claimed that sex had become the new barometer of success. Sex was to couples in the 1970s what material possessions were to the "Joneses" of the 1950s. Like La Barre, they reported that couples continued to have trouble communicating honestly about their needs, feelings, and desires regardless of how much literature they had read about technique.

These sexual pressures had a multi-faceted impact. Some women experimented with lesbianism precisely because of the communication problems they had with the opposite sex. Moreover, Tavris and Harris observed that women flaunted their sexuality in order to create the impression of sexual sophistication, whether or not they actually felt it: "Today's women, aware of

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491 Tavris and Harris, 48.
492 Tavris and Harris, 49.
their own sexuality, have raised up an older myth of the insatiable siren whose lust destroys honorable men.” 493 Adopting a dangerously sensual exterior persona, they warned, empowered women but emasculated men. Some people fantasized about "uncomplicated 'zipless fucks,' to use Erica Jong's phrase, in which the dreamer is spontaneous and passionate and has no worries of performance or responsibility." Overall, the authors suggested working toward the goal of "intimacy without inequality," a move away from "self-absorption," and a "need to distinguish healthy selfishness from neurotic narcissism." 494 These two articles signaled that by 1976 the sexual revolution was evolving to provide a more diverse array of choices for all Americans regarding their personal sex lives rather than a hegemonic mandate. Both articles indicated that couples were growing weary of the pressure to conform and perform. Relationships needed more than olympiad orgasms to survive and flourish, as women and men of all political persuasions realized. Young people needed to regain the right to abstain. Promiscuity was decidedly out of fashion.

That same year, in 1976, Americans elected Georgia Governor James Earl Carter to the presidency by a very slim margin. A former minister, a humanitarian, and a Washington outsider, he was perhaps the only Democrat who could have captured the presidency in the midst of a resurgence of conservatism which prevailed in spite of the disgrace suffered by the Republicans after the Watergate scandal. Carter's nomination by the Democratic party signaled that Americans had had enough of radical politics, yet he still managed to capture the presidency. Although American society leaned toward the Right, the sexualization of femininity endured. Women and girls feared being labeled prudish if they did not embrace or even flaunt their sexuality. This resulted in a

493 Tavris and Harris, 50.
494 Tavris and Harris, 50.
sort of cultural schizophrenia. The same year Carter was elected, the blockbuster television series *Charlie's Angels* premiered, unleashing the ultimate dangerously sensual female prototype. This paradox was a result of the fears and anxieties permeating American psyches during the ongoing evolution of the sexual revolution.

Television in the 1970s, as it had for decades, both reflected and affected Americans' attitudes toward relationships, feminism, sexuality, and morality. Television shows crafted new images of single, independent women that grew more sexually assertive over the decade. In 1970, CBS mined the growing acceptance of independent women with *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970-1977). Produced by Mary Tyler Moore and her husband Grant Tinker, the popular series offered Americans an acceptably liberated female prototype. Moore played the lead in the series and meant the protagonist to be divorced. CBS refused, citing research suggesting Americans would find such a woman offensive; Moore and the network compromised on a broken engagement. Thus, the series begins with its lead character Mary Richards starting a new life for herself in Minneapolis after breaking off her engagement to a doctor. Mary Richards struck a compromise between radical images of feminism in the media and the reactionary housewives or struggling young single girls of earlier sitcoms: she was a moderate feminist in a feminine package. Signifying the gains for women in the workplace, Mary found a job as an associate producer of a local news show. Mary was significantly older than the last never-married single woman, Ann Marie of *That Girl*, and much more independent. Her character posed a more dire threat to the institution of marriage, but elements of conservatism made Mary less dangerous. She was attractive but not overtly

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sexual. In fact, Moore had appeared sexier and more desirable as Laura Petrie in *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. Further, Mary's demeanor was not in keeping with the rhetoric of the women's liberation movement. She was deferential to men and, although she held a prominent position at the news station, she acted more like a secretary. Male staff members whom she outranked, for example, called their boss by his first name, but she referred to Lou as "Mr. Grant."

The show sent mixed signals about single and married life, and it reflected the complexities of feminism and the sexual revolution in keeping with the more sophisticated tastes of American audiences in the 1970s. Although Mary was independent, in control of her life and not desperate for a man, her single friend Rhoda Morgenstern constantly fretted about men and revolved her life around the goals of marriage and weight loss. However, Mary's married friend Phyllis Lindstrom, financially secure through her marriage to a prominent doctor, was rarely portrayed in a favorable light either. Phyllis typified the woman of yesteryear who had married for the wrong reasons and was left unfulfilled. She often seemed bored and restless in the domestic sphere. Mary was the perfect compromise, a woman who wanted marriage but for the right reasons.

The second episode, "Today I Am a Ma'am" clearly demonstrated the conflicts women felt with the array of choices available to them. The episode opens with Mary and Rhoda lamenting their status as single women. Rhoda decides that they must take action and try to meet men. Phyllis, meanwhile, arrives to inform Mary that a boyfriend of Mary's from long ago is in town and is eager to see her. In a moment of loneliness and self-doubt, Mary decides to call Howard. Soon after his arrival, Mary realizes that it was a mistake to call him. She finds him annoying and obnoxious and cannot wait to get rid of him.

496 "Today I Am a Ma'am" *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, 26 September 1970, CBS, Mary Tyler Moore Productions. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
Ironically, their reunion ends with him telling her that, although he loves her, he cannot marry her. Mary, who has not even brought up the subject of marriage, is confounded by his proclamation. He cannot, he confesses, settle down and give up his bachelor lifestyle which affords him the freedom to "jet off to Duluth" at any given moment. Howard looks the fool and she the wise one as she ushers him out the door while he is apologizing for his fear of commitment. The implication is that women in the 1970s had choices. They could postpone marriage and thus wait until the 'right one' came along. Mary helped Americans to accept a more independent woman because she was not a threat to masculinity.

The show also reflected other trends and issues in American society. In 1972, for example, society's fixation with thinness is apparent in "Rhoda the Beautiful." Rhoda, who never looked particularly heavy by contemporary standards, was always considered overweight on the show, and her weight was the subplot of much of the show's humor. Mary and Phyllis, although quite thin, are presented as the ideal female types: skinny, waif-like, and flat-chested. In this episode, Rhoda loses twenty pounds, enters a beauty contest, and comes in third place. When Rhoda comes to Mary's office, she is the talk of the town. The men ogle her and comment on her shapely bottom, and the women are surprised by and rather jealous of the new competitor on the block. The show suggested that thinness and male approval were prerequisites for happiness and self-confidence. By the end of the show, Rhoda is confident and secure, not because her career is going better, but because she has dropped weight.

497 "Rhoda the Beautiful," The Mary Tyler Moore Show, 21 October 1972, CBS, Mary Tyler Moore Productions. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
A 1973 episode illustrated the impact of the sexual revolution on marriage. In 'The Lars Affair,' Phyllis' husband Lars has an extramarital affair. The object of his indiscretion is not, however, a seductive young supermodel, but rather the domesticated, middle-aged Sue Ann Nivens, the show's embodiment of right wing female conservatism. Sue Ann is the epitome of the reactionary woman in an era of liberalism and is indicative of the rising backlash against women's liberation. She stars in a cooking show called "The Happy Homemaker" and makes her living glorifying women's domestic role. When Phyllis analyzes the situation, she confesses that her sexual aggressiveness caused Lars to resort to an affair with a more traditional woman. "I don't like to brag," she says, but "we have an incredible love life." She noted that some men were threatened by a "real woman." The show ends with a reconciliation between Phyllis and Lars because Mary threatens to expose the outwardly prim Sue Ann's adulterous behavior to her public if she continues the affair. Much like the articles in women's magazines and the advice books of the 1970s, the episode intimated that sexual aggressiveness by women could be taken too far and become detrimental to masculinity and marriage in general. A hyperdomesticated woman like Sue Ann was the perfect antidote, although she was actually a wolf in sheep's clothing, grasping after other women's men. In most episodes, Sue Ann's efforts to catch men proved unsuccessful, and she was effectively humiliated. The show did not, through the character of Sue Ann, endorse the life of a "happy homemaker"; rather, it mocked the idea.

The Mary Tyler Moore Show was a critical success, winning twenty-seven Emmy awards over its seven year run and retaining its coveted prime time slot over the life of the series. Between 1974 and 1977, though, it lost substantial

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468 "The Lars Affair," The Mary Tyler Moore Show, 15 January 1973, CBS, Mary Tyler Moore Productions. All scenes and dialogue taken directly from the episode.
Initially, it spoke to many Americans who were confused about the rapid changes in society regarding gender roles, marriage, and family. For Mary, the workplace served to house her surrogate family, which likely placated the fears of many single or divorced people approaching or exceeding their thirties. The show was not, however, particularly empowering for women, nor did it satiate cultural appetites for a more liberated and sexualized femininity. By the time of its last season in 1976 and 1977, new dangerously sensual single females had arrived on the scene in full force to eclipse the likes of Mary Richards.

In 1976, ABC's Charlie's Angels (1976-1981) became a smash television hit and had an enormous cultural impact, affecting fashion, hairstyles, clothing, and attitudes about feminism and femininity. The show starred three sexy private detectives, Sabrina Duncan, Jill Munroe, and Kelly Garrett, played respectively by Kate Jackson, Farah Fawcett, and Jaclyn Smith. Their characters epitomized the dangerously sensual compromise for independent, liberated women. They were erotic and tantalizing yet powerful and effective at men's jobs. They worked for Charlie, their elusive boss who was heard but never seen in public, his character vaguely reminiscent of the reclusive Hugh Hefner. Charlie had rescued them from a life of boredom after graduation from the police academy, at which time they had been relegated to menial tasks like directing traffic. Under Charlie's tutelage, they enjoyed exciting careers filled with danger and adventure, mostly posing as undercover detectives. Sexual innuendoes, braless

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499 Jones, 197.
500 Jones, 200-201.
501 Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, The Complete Directory to Prime Time TV Shows 1946-Present (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), 156. The show rated number five in popularity in its first season and number four in its second season. The Mary Tyler Moore Show, by comparison, dropped out of the top 25 during the 1976-77 and 1977-78 seasons. It had been nineteenth place in the 1975-76 season. See Marsh and Brooks, 1101-1103, for more information.
outfits, and racy scenarios offset the often mundane plot lines and dialogue. The Angels did not fit the stereotype of a beautiful yet ineffectual "bimbo." The women were intelligent, shrewd, and effective. They asserted their physical power in ways that had previously been reserved for men: shooting guns, hand-to-hand combat, and dangerous car chases. Not since Honey West, also produced by Aaron Spelling, had there been a sexy female television character who used violence so blatantly. Much like this predecessor, Charlie's Angels presented women as stronger and tougher than men. Bosley, the office manager, was less powerful than Sam, Honey's side kick, as he was devoid of sex appeal. While Sam and Honey enjoyed an occasional flirtation, it was clear that Honey held all the cards; any sexual liaison between the flustered Bosley and any of the seductive Angels was unthinkable.

Although immediately chastised by feminists for its objectification of women, the show gained market share not just among pubescent boys but also among educated professional women. Amazingly, the show ranked seventh among college graduates and those in the middle-income bracket and above.\(^{502}\) This statistic may not have been as perplexing as it seemed at the time. The series capitalized on the growing fears of independent women in the face of a mounting backlash against women's liberation. The Angels' edgy characters were, unlike Mary's, in keeping with the energy of the women's liberation movement. Many of the episodes revolved around their attempts to rescue other women from "bad" men or misguided women.\(^{503}\) In this way, the show was reminiscent of the consciousness-raising sessions and female solidarity espoused by the movement.


\(^{503}\) Douglas, 214-215.
In "Angels in Chains," for example, the women are sent undercover to investigate a corrupt prison system in a small southern town. Most of the female inmates are sexy young women who have been framed. The Angels end up in jail, on purpose, when an officer plants a bag of marijuana in their car after stopping them for a speeding violation. The prison system exudes male repressiveness, replete with evil male prison guards who hint that sexual favors will afford the girls perquisites. The female prison guards embody the cultural stereotypes of lesbians as they gape at the showering Angels and are represented as manly, misguided bulldykes devoid of any feminine compassion. Men and women alike are complicit in the scheme to hire out the nubile young women as prostitutes for wealthy men. The Angels eventually implicate the perpetrators and rescue the innocent young women (one of whom is played by Kim Bassinger.) The young, innocent female victims are alluring yet weak. The female villains are unsightly, unfeminine, and powerful.

The Angels struck a compromise between these two extremes, offering a dangerously sensual solution to the conundrum of balancing femininity with women's independence and liberation. They provided one model for empowered women struggling with insecurities about their newfound liberation, namely that their independence would render them undesirable to men. The Angels were independent and successful but, above all, they were desirable and seductive. Moreover, the Angels offered a solution for women who felt frustrated in the male-dominated workplace: they used their sexuality and femininity as power tools and as instruments of liberation. Rarely did the Angels resort to sleeping with a man to accomplish their mission; rather, they simply armed themselves with their sexually alluring bodies, which effectively

masked their inner strength. Men stood transfixed like deer in the headlights, mesmerized by their sexuality, much like the later Rowdy Ruff Boys when confronted by the puckering Power Puff Girls. Charlie's Angels did for women in the 1970s what Barbie had done for girls more than a decade earlier. The series taught women how to capitalize on their femininity and sexuality rather than become victimized by it. Misguided women who did not learn to use their sexual power effectively, they implied, would not find true liberation.

Judith Rossner's 1975 novel Looking for Mr. Goodbar, made into a feature film in 1977, underscored the notion that women's efficacious management of sexual power was central to their survival in this era. Loosely based on the true story of a promiscuous woman who was murdered by a deranged man during a one-night stand, the novel traces the fictitious Theresa Dunn's misguided efforts to embrace her liberation. She engages in a series of meaningless sexual encounters with men who are generally low-lifes, and she cannot form meaningful relationships with respectable men. In the book, Dunn is an elementary school teacher who appears to personify female propriety during the school day. She leads a double life, though, frequenting sleazy bars and engaging in random sexual liaisons at night: this was the quest for the "zipless fuck" run amok. In the novel, twenty-eight year old Dunn is characterized as emotionally unstable. She harbors feelings of inferiority due to a mild deformity in her spine, the consequence of her having contracted polio in childhood. In contrast, her outgoing and magnetic sister Katherine is beautiful and admired by men. Her sister fully embraces sexual liberation, but does so without losing control of her life, ostensibly because she is in control of her

choices. Katherine experiments with group sex while married to a respectable man, eventually divorcing him and leaving him baffled. She, however, has mastered the art of seduction, while Theresa is left the helpless victim, a pawn of her own twisted desires. She becomes a target for society's depraved men.

Theresa's first meaningful sexual relationship occurred with a predatory married professor while she was in college. He abruptly dumped her at the end of the semester. After that, she experiences a series of brief encounters with random men, the most enduring being with an Italian man named Tony who breezes in and out of her life whenever he feels like it. She cannot work up any excitement for James, an attorney and the only decent man in her life, who ironically thinks she is frigid or prudish. James is the perfect "new man," sensitive, caring, and appreciative of her intellect. His desire to marry her is tempered only by his respect for her independence. She craves the rough, dangerous men in singles bars, though, when it comes to sex.

Theresa hides her alter ego from James and even begins to have sex with him, but she does not derive any satisfaction from it. For a time, she reforms and makes an honest effort to change. Her inner demons, however, continue to haunt her. She tries to express her feelings to James: "I don't understand you. I don't sense your dark side."506 Regarding his unconditional acceptance of her, Theresa says, "You've never gotten really angry at me even though sometimes I'm a perfect shit." Her inner voice says it a bit differently, "If you could give me a good beating when I acted like that, I would like you better for it. I might even be able to enjoy sex."507 In the end, Theresa succumbs to another random liaison, this time with a drifter harboring a criminal record and a pathological personality. He

506 Rossner, 247.
507 Rossner, 247.
smothers her with a pillow when she tries to remove him from her apartment after sex.

Although critics characterized the novel as an assault on the sexual revolution, it actually spoke a great deal about women and self-esteem. Theresa became a victim of her misguided attempts to find personal fulfillment through random sexual encounters. She served as a frightening example of what could happen when women feign sophistication about sexuality when they are actually suffering from unresolved feelings of inferiority. This certainly never happened to any of the Angels: they were always in control. Looking for Mr. Goodbar also alerted women to the very real dangers of random sexual encounters in an era before the term "date rape" had been coined. In the 1970s, men expected women to follow through on their flirtations. As Ms. had pointed out in its premier issue, women in many instances during the sexual revolution lost the right to say no, or simply to change their minds.

The film version of Looking for Mr. Goodbar, released in 1977, further popularized the story. Richard Brooks, who penned the screenplay, wanted to make a film about a liberated woman. Dunn, played by Diane Keaton, looks the part of liberated woman, but she is still portrayed as a loner in need of psychological help. The film's graphic depictions of sex and violence further sensationalized the saga. In a February 1978 Ms. article called "Who Else is Looking for Mr. Goodbar?" author Tracy Johnson compared the book and the film to the actual event. The real woman, Roseann Quinn, had had many friends and was from a stable family, contrary to the fictional versions of her fate. She was, however, suffering from depression and stress; she had been

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509 Tracy Johnson, "Who Else is Looking for Mr. Goodbar?" Ms, February 1978, 25-26.
working in a violent and dangerous urban high school where she had almost been raped. When Johnson interviewed Richard Brooks, he repeated that he chose to do the film because he wanted to tell a story about a liberated woman. When she pointed out the contradiction of making a film about a liberated woman who gets murdered, he said, "That's what happened to her. That isn't my fault." Johnson criticized Brooks' presentation because he made Dunn look weak and ineffectual. In reality, Roseann Quinn had been a civil rights activist and was described as outgoing and good-humored. She wanted to marry and settle down, but seemed to be looking for men in the wrong places. She was an "ordinary girl," not likely "to find happiness, with or without a man, in some oddball lifestyle," thus, she represented the many young women struggling to make sense of the new morality who were "floundering around unnoticed, except by the men who sense their desperation." Both the film and the novel had great cultural currency in American society in the late 1970s. They served as catalysts for and as evidence of a more conservative attitude toward casual sex in the late 1970s. The story advocated commitment over promiscuity, and its popularity signified that American values were shifting further Right. This shift affected single and married women alike: promiscuous women and selfish mothers were both key targets of the political and cultural backlash against women's liberation.

Regarding the impact of women's liberation and feminism on the American family, Kramer vs. Kramer (1979) was perhaps the most telling film of the decade. In some ways, it encapsulated the confusion many people felt as the 1970s came to an end. The film depicted, in quite emotional and negative

510 Johnson, 26.
511 Johnson, 26.
light, the impact of women's independence on family life. It won five Academy Awards in 1980, the same year of Ronald Reagan's election.

Ted and Joanna Kramer are a thirty-something urban couple with a five-year-old son named Billy. Joanna, a Smith college graduate, had given up an entry-level position in publishing to stay home and raise Billy while Ted built his career in advertising. As Ted comes home to tell Joanna about a big promotion on the horizon at the agency, Joanna announces that she is very unhappy, she does not love him anymore, and she is leaving him -- and their son Billy. Ted is in shock and struggles to cope with single parenthood while holding down a high profile position in a corporation very unsympathetic to his situation.

Ted expects Joanna to return home after a few days, but it soon becomes clear that this is more than simply a nasty fight that will blow over. Joanna leaves for eighteen months to "find herself" in California, then returns seeking custody of Billy. She justifies leaving Billy by claiming that during her marriage to Ted, she was so unhappy that she lost all self-esteem and felt incompetent in her role as a mother. Joanna is, indeed, a changed woman upon her return. She secures a high-paying job and now makes more money than Ted. Ted, in contrast, lost his executive-level position at the agency and was forced to take a lower-paying position in the art department of another agency. However, Ted has transformed also; instead of being a distant, ineffectual, and self-absorbed part-time father, he is a caring and responsible single parent. His relationship with Billy has grown tremendously, and he feels certain that the court will award him custody. The court, however, still sides with Joanna, awarding her custody and requiring Ted to pay child support. Just as Schlafly had pointed out, Joanna enjoyed the status of special privilege. In the end, though, Joanna rejects such privilege. Joanna is so moved by Ted's transformation that she cannot take Billy
away from him. The film concludes with a tearful Joanna informing Ted that she has reconsidered and will let Ted have custody of their son.

On the surface, the film is very unsympathetic toward women's liberation. Ted makes several references to the negative impact of the movement on his relationship with Joanna. He blames their neighbor Margaret, for example, when she comes by to ask about Joanna. Margaret tries to explain that Joanna had been very unhappy for years, and Ted tries to blame her for encouraging Joanna to leave. He mentions that Joanna was not unhappy until Margaret divorced her husband and quips, "sisterhood!" In explaining his predicament to his boss, he jokingly blames "women's lib," and his boss erroneously predicts that Joanna will be back before too long. The film is also quite critical of Ted as the absentee, career-obsessed father. The first day on his own, he cannot even make breakfast for Billy and himself, burning his hand and the meal in the process. When he drops Billy off at school he asks, "what grade are you in?"

Eventually, however, Joanna is vilified and Ted is humanized. On the stand at the custody hearings she is brutally questioned by Ted's attorney who inquires into her sex life and tries to position her as unstable and promiscuous. Ted is unfairly made to look like a bad parent when Joanna's lawyer brings up an incident when Billy fell off a jungle gym and injured himself. Both attorneys go for the jugular, but the attack differs according to gender. The film does manage to portray the complexity involved in balancing the need for individual fulfillment with the responsibilities of family life. Ted admits on the stand that he did not listen to Joanna when she tried to talk to him. In fact, the night she left him, he was talking on the phone and ignoring her when she was trying to tell him that she was leaving. He mentions that Joanna always told him that a woman has the same ambitions and need for fulfillment outside the home as a
man, and he admits that he has come to agree with her. Conversely, he asks why society always assumes that the woman is the better parent, citing himself as an example of a man who rose to the challenge and stayed committed to his son.

The film served as something of a warning to men who were obsessed with their careers. In an era when women's opportunities abounded, men could be left to fend for themselves. Worse yet, they could be forced to provide for two households and still find themselves alone. The overriding emotional effect of the film centered on its depiction of the impact of divorce on children. Billy, an adorable six-year-old, is the real victim in the story. Joanna never witnesses the nights he cries himself to sleep, the numbing process he goes through when he realizes his mother is gone indefinitely, or the fear he feels when she threatens to take him away from his father. Viewers surely felt the little boy's pain: perhaps her rejection of Ted was justified, but leaving Billy was unforgivable. The film reflected America's renewed focus on family and the growing backlash against feminism that would persist despite -- or because of -- the socioeconomic gains made by women in the 1980s and 1990s. With the overwhelming number of deadbeat Dads avoiding child support payments with impunity and growing numbers of single mothers living in poverty in the 1970s, it is ironic that this story made headlines. Indeed, *Kramer vs. Kramer* illuminated many complex issues facing Americans as they moved into a new era. Although it did not resolve many of the tensions involved in balancing individual desires with the needs of the family, it did call attention to them and in this way served as a bridge between a decade of liberalism and a decade of conservative resurgence.

In the same year, 1979, the Moral Majority formed and went on to provide a sizable constituency supporting Ronald Reagan in the 1980 presidential
election. Jerry Falwell, evangelical Baptist minister and founder of the organization, explained the origins and agenda of the movement:

The Moral Majority was not a religious movement. People of like moral and political values were uniting to save the country. We came together around shared moral issues in our country's time of crisis. This was war, and temporarily it was necessary to put aside the issues that divided us to work together for the goals we had in common. To win the war against crime and immorality, to save the American family, to stop the killing of 1.5 million unborn infants every year would take everyone willing to take a stand regardless of his or her race or religion, social class or political party.513

Jerry Falwell credited the group with electing President Ronald Reagan in 1980 and with helping many other conservative politicians win office. Falwell also railed against pornography, drugs, and the general "immoral" climate in American society in the aftermath of the 1960s and 1970s, although the Republican party did not rally around those points specifically. However, Reagan accepted the patronage of the Moral Majority and kept family values and anti-abortion planks in the Republican platforms of the coming years.514 The New Right, however, eventually distanced itself from the religious fringe, especially as anti-abortion activists turned violent and became a liability to the party. Regardless, the family values agenda remained a hallmark of the New Right.

Somewhat surprisingly, given the resurgence of conservatism, the sexualization of femininity continued. As Reagan took office, a new cultural icon appeared on the scene, offering a new brand of powerful femininity. Madonna, as she was ironically known, symbolized the new, sexually assertive women: self-objectified, empowered, and poised to capitalize on her own persona. She

flaunted her sexuality like none before her and used her femininity to become one of the wealthiest women in America. American women and girls, through cultural icons like *Charlie’s Angels* and Madonna, learned to use sexuality as a power tool just as the backlash against feminism gained momentum. Advertisers helped to keep women focused on appearance, as they preyed on female insecurities and fed women’s obsession with looking sexually attractive. Even the outbreak of a strange new disease which struck fear into the hearts of the sexually free did not derail the ascendancy of the dangerously sensual woman. Promiscuity, perhaps, would fall out of fashion, but looking promiscuous and desirable would not. Women wielded sexuality as a weapon, both intentionally and unwittingly, to stave off the backlash against their growing economic, social, and political power. Sexualization, objectification, and unattainable standards of beauty would be the rather steep price for liberation.
EPILOGUE
Poptarts, Whore Madonnas, and Grrl Power:
The Legacy of Liberation

Women so easily stir men’s senses and awaken in the bottom of their hearts the remains of an almost extinct desire that if there were ever some unhappy climate on this earth where philosophy had introduced this custom . . . the men tyrannized over by women would at last become their victims and would be dragged to their deaths without ever being able to defend themselves.515

--Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile (1762)

By the close of the century, America’s cultural landscape had been entirely reshaped and its notions of femininity retooled. Powerful, sexy women learned to flaunt their sexuality. Surfing the channels of both cable and network television today, viewers are exposed to a sea of images that at times appear downright pornographic. On television, in film, and in the pages of magazines, being a sex object is portrayed as a hip, trendy, and perfectly valid expression of female empowerment. The dangerously sensual construct is not, as some conservatives contend, a descent into hedonism and decadence fostered by deranged feminists, nor is it a sellout by a misguided younger generation of women, as some older feminists of the 1970s surmise. Rather, it is the culmination of a trend that has been transpiring for decades, a process in which conservatives and liberals, males and females all played a part.

In the 1950s, advertisers and corporations, aided by the cold war and America’s aversion to communism, crafted the sexual sell to placate women’s aspirations, tap into women’s growing economic power, and exploit Americans’ new attitudes toward sex. Hugh Hefner demonstrated the viability of sex as a market, and a singles culture gained popularity by the early 1960s. A new, sexy

single girl image replaced the "spinster" of the prewar era, and the competition --
real or imagined -- from single women prompted a dramatic shift in cultural
representations of married women by the early 1960s. A youthful, more sensual
American cultural landscape coincided with Kennedy's presidency, which
brought with it images of a sexually appealing, young, and cultured First Lady.
Single and married women alike felt increasing pressure to conform to youthful
standards of beauty that grew more unattainable and more sensual over the
years. This trend arose in concert with a growing conviction that sexual
satisfaction for men and women was an essential component of a healthy
relationship. Moreover, in women's minds, looking sexy became inexorably
linked with attaining sexual satisfaction, in no small part due to the many ways in
which female sexuality was integrated into American popular culture.

Over the course of the 1960s, the resurgence of feminism and the
exploitation of the sexual revolution and the counterculture of the baby boom
generation turned American values upside down. Cultural resistance to the
sexualization of femininity, spurred on by the social changes of the era,
periodically surfaced, attempting to derail the trend toward a more provocative
female prototype. These oppositional forces had their grounding in concerns
over America's cold war policies, particularly regarding the Vietnam War, and in
an overall antiestablishment sentiment that permeated America's youth and
some older Americans who joined forces with them. The androgynous fashions
of young Americans in the mid-1960s, the earthy hippies of the late 1960s, the
women's liberationists of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and radical lesbian-
feminists of the 1970s all served as forces of resistance. However, by the mid-
1970s, the dangerously sensual woman had endured, spurred on in part by the
backlash against radicalism in general, and against women's liberation in
particular, and by the continued fixation with sex in American society. The effects of the backlash were magnified in large measure by the treatment of feminism in the media and popular culture. Women reacted the way they did to the cultural coverage of feminism because of a deep-rooted obsession with beauty, sexual attraction, and sexual satisfaction that had been ingrained in women for decades. This fixation predated not only the backlash but the feminist era as well. The linking of feminism with lesbianism and unfeminine traits only strengthened the backlash. Because of the fanning of these insecurities, many women otherwise supportive of women's rights worried that the feminist label would brand them unappealing to men.

Conservatives seized upon this weakness and likewise sanctioned a new, sexualized female image as an alternative to the sexless, unfeminine stereotype they helped to create. In ever-increasing numbers, women distanced themselves from feminism because of the negative imagery it conjured up regarding sex appeal, sexuality, and beauty. Not content to return to a reticent state of objectification, however, women forged the dangerously sensual compromise: they would get away with being assertive, spunky, and liberated by looking sexually provocative and appealing to men. A new generation of girls grew up with these alluring images and came to embrace them as symbols of empowerment, much to the chagrin of 1970s feminists who had rallied against what they perceived to be the objectification and commodification of female sexuality. The feminist label remains anathema for many girls and young women, while portraying women and girls as a blatantly sexual beings is perceived as fashionable, powerful, and perfectly respectable.

In the broader context, the sexualization of femininity was part of a larger cultural shift in American society and popular culture. By the early 1970s, nudity
and profanity were common features of Hollywood films. Sex manuals had replaced marital advice books, respectable fathers had subscriptions to magazines like *Playboy*, premarital sex was an accepted part of society, and couples on all sides of the political spectrum considered a satisfying sex life an essential component of a good relationship. Prime time television, spurred on by competition from the new cable television industry, increasingly relaxed its restrictions regarding the sexual content of its programs from the late 1970s onward.516 Visual images of powerful, provocative women had proven lucrative, as evidenced by *Charlie’s Angels*. Not only men but also women and girls tuned in faithfully to watch the braless brazen beauties fight oppression. They paved the way for a host of tough, sexy, female superheroines who would comprise a formidable component of the "grrl power" movement in the 1990s and beyond.

The 1980s proved a troublesome time for empowered American women. Supported by the gains of the feminist movement, American women struggled to balance the demands of career and family.517 The supermom syndrome left working mothers exhausted and unfulfilled, and single career women worried that they would never marry. Faulty statistics about women's fertility and marriageability fueled women's fears about delaying marriage and childbearing. Indeed, as Susan Faludi aptly demonstrated in *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, in the 1980s, American society grew increasingly critical of women in the public sphere. Popular culture tended to demonize career women and glorify motherhood, spurred on by the family values crusaders so

visible during the presidencies of Ronald Reagan and George H. Bush. In the 1980s, corporations and their advertising agents sought to contain women by channeling their new economic power into a futile but endlessly profitable quest for physical perfection. In her 1991 book by the same name, Naomi Wolf dubbed this phenomenon the "beauty myth," which she defined as follows:

More women have more money and power and scope and legal recognition than we have ever had before; but in terms of how we feel about ourselves physically, we may actually be worse off than our grandmothers. Recent research consistently shows that inside the majority of the West's controlled, attractive, successful working women, there is a secret "underlife" poisoning our freedom; infused with notions of beauty, it is a dark vein of self-hatred, physical obsessions, terror of aging, and dread of lost control. It is no accident that so many potentially powerful women feel this way. We are in the midst of a violent backlash against feminism that uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against women's advancement: the beauty myth.

In the midst of the backlash, with so few other female role models to admire, women and girls looked to assertive, sexually powerful, financially successful women as new symbols of empowerment. In the 1980s, Music Television (MTV) upped the ante even further, showing images of women in sexually suggestive and openly erotic vignettes. Stars like Madonna shaped teenaged minds and influenced fashion trends; she and others like her became very wealthy. As women executives bumped their heads on glass ceilings and struggled to balance the demands of career and family, icons like Madonna bumped and grinded their way to success, effectively circumventing patriarchy

by flaunting their sexuality. Madonna had an enormous cultural impact. Girls and young women, emulating their new idol, wore bras and underwear over their clothes, adopted her cavalier attitudes toward sex, and followed her outrageously sexual example.520 Using sexuality as a power tool was not a new concept. However, now women profited from self-exploitation rather than being exploited or victimized by it. Unlike the sexy starlets in *Valley of the Dolls* who became pawns of the entertainment establishment, or real life women like Marilyn Monroe who fell victim to Hollywood's insatiable demands, Madonna took control of her destiny and proved a savvy business woman in her own right.

By the 1990s, images of sexually assertive women further suffused American popular culture. Picking up on the trend toward a more sensual cultural landscape, network television made staples of racy banter and sexual innuendo, while cable television continued to push the envelope on sex and gratuitous violence.521 Programs dealt more directly with the subject of sex and relationships, and shows about singles and nontraditional families outnumbered family sitcoms. Perhaps no show encapsulated the conflicting options open to contemporary American women in the aftermath of profound social change more than Home Box Office's (HBO) *Sex and the City*. The show follows four sexually liberated, financially independent thirty-something women who epitomize the paradox of the modern career woman. The women are not only financially independent, they are well-off. None of them needs a man, but all of them are searching for "the one." In the meantime, they enjoy rewarding careers and exciting sex lives, as well as fulfilling relationships with one another.

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520 Watson, 194.
521 Watson, 194-195.
Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha all have the economic power to sustain the good life indefinitely, a far cry from the single girls of the early 1960s about whom Helen Gurley Brown wrote. They shop at expensive boutiques, take lavish vacations, and pay for it all themselves. Unlike the vulnerable loner Theresa Dunn in *Looking For Mr. Goodbar*, these women are in control of their sexual affairs, and they draw on each other for support. They can handle casual sex and make good choices regarding their partners. The language and tone of the show are reminiscent of Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*; they use profanity and express their sexual desire in frank and unabashed language. The camaraderie they share is similar to the sisterhood espoused by liberationists of the 1970s, but they are not male-bashers. In fact, the show enjoys a large male viewership. It is no wonder, since all four women are sexy and desirable. Thus, they entice both male and female viewers with provocative dress, racy dialogue, and steamy scenarios.

In the process, they illuminate very real issues facing women and men in the aftermath of the sexual revolution and feminism, touching on such sobering topics as infertility, single parenthood, abortion, and bisexual relationships in a way that pokes fun at people's insecurities and society's contradictions. The series is growing in popularity, with seven million viewers tuning in to watch the 2002 season finale\(^{522}\) for a series that garnered thirteen Emmy nominations.\(^{523}\) It has found an audience beyond the United States, and the series, available on tape or DVD, is described by one supplier in the United Kingdom as cutting edge feminism:

Much like the novels of Fanny Burney or Jane Austen 200 years before, *Sex and the City* tackles that perennial female conundrum, how to maintain independence from men (intellectual,

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sexual, financial) while seeking the ideal life-partner for whom that much-cherished independence can safely be sacrificed. So it is that Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha prowl relentlessly the canyons of Manhattan in search of perfect mates, all of whom fall woefully short of their needs in one crucial way or another. Yet, with biological clocks ticking and suppressed nesting instincts fighting back, the foursome often find themselves dangerously close to despair. The dating game can be deadly serious sometimes. Which is why *Sex and the City* is not just good TV, it's great TV: for all its refreshingly cynical wit and superficial vivaciousness, the show has at its heart a streak of pathos and painful truth that resonates deeply with its audience.

While thirtysomething career women look to their HBO icons for reassurance and validation, girls and young women have been flooded with new representations of strong, sexy, powerful heroines. The "grrl power" movement continues to exert a strong pull on females in American society. This dynamic, contemporary movement is difficult to pin down, as it is still in flux, but it is generally characterized by an embracing of traditionally female traits as sources of power while also appropriating aspects of masculinity like physical strength and sexual aggressiveness. Its heroines are as diverse as the diminutive *Powerpuff Girls* on the Cartoon Network; lethal, dangerously sensual characters like Lara Croft in the film *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (2001); girl groups like the Spice Girls; or megastars like "poptart" Britney Spears. Grrl power is, in fact, a bizarre hybrid of traditional femininity and masculinity. Some observers express concern that the movement glorifies violence, encouraging girls and young women to become more aggressive. Girl-on-girl combat scenes in films and on television are proving to be a crowd-pleasers, and statistics show that America's real life girls are becoming more aggressive.525

524 *Sex and the City* product description at Sale Depot Co. UK, on line at www.sale-depot.co.uk/dvd/item/B000067A90/.
One common denominator among the diverse elements of the grrl power movement, however, is sexual power. Pop music star Britney Spears has become an icon of the movement, much to the chagrin of conservatives. In "Grrl Power and Hookup Culture: Feminism in the Modern Age," appearing in America's Voice: A Forum for Conservative Americans, author Jim Cohen noted that "Britney-ware is all the rage among girls, who have discovered that they like the association of empowerment with sexy dressing." He chastised companies for marketing such attire to girls as young as eight years of age. While he noted that most Americans would likely agree, especially with a renewed effort underway to prosecute child pornographers, he berated the wider cultural complaisance about such clothing for teenagers and young women. He also linked provocative dressing to a wider acceptance of "casual, meaningless sex" or "hookup culture" as it has come to be known, blaming shows like Sex and the City for promoting promiscuity. Ironically, he also attacked feminists for this fashion and sexual promiscuity, focusing on the group who had traditionally rallied against such objectification. Racy clothing, Cohen claimed, was a symptom of "the sick and degenerated state of both contemporary culture and modern feminism -- which of course is largely the same thing." 

Cohen and his organization are not the only ones concerned about the sexualization of femininity. It is ironic, however, that Britney Spears, who initially marketed herself as a virgin, has become a lightning rod for public debate about declining morality. In a PBS Frontline report, "Merchants of Cool," correspondent Douglass Rushkoff offered a different spin. Rushkoff demonstrated that today's thirty-three million teenagers, the largest group of

526 Cohen, 1-4.
527 Cohen, 1.
adolescents ever, are also the generation facing the most intense, age-specific marketing effort in history. With 150 billion dollars in purchasing power, teens are scrutinized now by corporations who study teens like anthropologists once observed exotic foreign cultures. Rushkoff, like Cohen, observed that Britney Spears, catapulted to fame by this marketing machine, has spawned a new generation of "midrisfs" seeking to emulate their pop star heroine in dress and mannerisms. However, Rushkoff does not blame Spears or feminists for the phenomenon, but rather looks to the media giants of corporate America.

Media conglomerates prey upon teenagers to gain market share in an increasingly competitive yet lucrative demographic sector. They market whatever teens deem "cool," knowing from experience that they know what will sell to their age group better than the corporations. Marketers seek out the shocking and the novel, be it sexy clothing, tattoos, body piercings, offensive rage rock lyrics, or gratuitous violence. Talent scouts locate potential icons like Spears, package them, bring them to market, and profit handsomely in the process. In addition to an increasingly violent and sexual cultural landscape, what results, Rushkoff contends, is a self-perpetuating caricature of young women and men. The hypersexualized female prototype, "the midriff," is foisted upon younger and younger girls, forcing them to feign maturity and sexual sophistication well before they are ready. In contrast, young men and boys remain arrested in adolescence, a generation of misogynistic "mooks" who exhibit grotesque, crass behavior and objectify women for sport, epitomized by media products like MTV's Jackass and Comedy Central's The Man Show.529

529 "Merchants of Cool", PBS Frontline, dir. Douglass Rushkoff, prod. Rachel Dretzin and Barak Goodman, (PBS), airing 27 February 2001. All quotations and information taken directly from the program. For reactions by teenagers and viewers, see www.pbs.org.
His research demonstrates that, in the highly fragmented television market, it is difficult to be socially responsible and still produce dividends to shareholders. Warner Brothers television network, or the WB, tried to introduce family-friendly programs but could not compete with the racy teen dramas on other stations. They found success with a compromise, *Dawson's Creek*, a dramatic series which, its creators claim, takes a socially responsible approach to sex, neither glorifying nor ignoring it, but rather portraying its ramifications in a realistic manner. Rushkoff's analysis supports to some degree the notion that consumers have the power to shape their own cultural landscape. Researchers scramble to find teenagers who can lead them in the right direction, and they conduct extensive interviews and form focus groups to locate, define, and package the next wave of cool. As Rushkoff pointed out, corporations found out that "cool" is the birthright of teenagers and only they can define it. However, as Rushkoff points out, there are fewer and fewer corporations controlling the American media, and they are in business to make a profit not to instill morality. It becomes increasingly difficult to escape the cultural paradigms, however consumer-driven they may be. American media and American society have become interdependent and self-perpetuating in what Rushkoff calls a "giant feedback loop," a process much more complex and all-consuming than simple co-optation. As such, it is almost impossible to overestimate the power of American media on the individual, or to escape its cumulative, global impact.

Recent research suggests that younger women growing up in the aftermath of feminism and the sexual revolution are appropriating the freedom afforded them and shaping their ideologies to fit their contemporary realities. Much of their world view has been shaped by the print and visual culture. Paula Kamen's recent study of Generation X (Gen X) women, *Her Way: Young Women*
Remake the Sexual Revolution, revealed the diverse practices and attitudes about sex and power among young women born after the baby boom.\textsuperscript{530} She interviewed over one hundred women, most of whom were born between 1965 and 1975, and who came from mixed ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.\textsuperscript{531}

Kamen opened with an analysis of the Monica Lewinsky scandal in 1998, noting that President Bill Clinton himself was reportedly dumbfounded by Lewinsky's behavior. When Clinton tried to break off the affair, Lewinsky did not become a wounded, shrinking violet. On the contrary, Lewinsky demanded a powerful and lucrative position and threatened to expose their affair if he did not deliver. Clinton failed to realize that Lewinsky had emerged from a generation which played by an entirely new set of rules, ones that could, in fact, unseat a president.\textsuperscript{532} According to Kamen, "She was brazen, relentless, and self-centered in her quest for sex and power. In other words, she acted like a man. Instead of being innocent prey, the [Starr] report revealed that she even initiated her affair with the president, as well as many of their sexual encounters."\textsuperscript{533} Kamen saw Lewinsky as a female consequence of the social changes of the previous decades. Stated Kamen, "Lewinsky was born during and shaped by the sexual revolution, the women's movement, new education and work opportunities for women, new religious freedoms, and the information age." As a result, women like Lewinsky "share more of men's power, sense of entitlement, and social clout."\textsuperscript{534} Kamen observed that Lewinsky represented the "darker side" of sexual liberation in that she resorted to blackmail and threats to get what she wanted. Nonetheless, she saw her as a useful starting point for an


\textsuperscript{531} Kamen, 241.

\textsuperscript{532} Kamen, 3-4.

\textsuperscript{533} Kamen, 4.

\textsuperscript{534} Kamen, 3.
examination of Gen X attitudes toward sex and power. Gen X women refuse to cast themselves into socially-prescribed roles, and Kamen's research reveals that younger women now feel free to adapt society to their own morality. Kamen also points to television programs like *Sex and the City, Dark Angel,* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as influential examples of cultural products showcasing women "doing sex on their own terms." Kamen concluded that "It is as though the 1970s sexual revolution never died but ever so slowly evolved from a male-defined movement into one in which women now call the shots." In some instances, calling the shots means acting like men. She noted that statistically women are approaching parity with men in terms of the age of first sexual encounter, the number of partners, and the number of casual encounters. Conversely, there is also a movement toward embracing virginity. Rather than being embarrassed about their lack of sexual experience, as some had been during the 1970s, these virgins are lauding themselves. Indeed, Kamen's interviews demonstrated that an ideology of sexual individualism and a mandate for tolerance about the choices made by others are perhaps the only defining values shared by the majority of Gen X American women. Perhaps this in and of itself says a great deal about how far women have come since the 1950s. Women today, because of the social, economic, and political gains of feminism and the freedoms afforded them as a consequence of the sexual revolution, feel that they are in a position to set their own standards and live life on their own terms.

Regarding the legacy of feminism for Gen X women, two self-proclaimed "Third Wave" feminists recently co-authored *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism,*

535 Kamen, 5.
536 Kamen, 7.
537 Kamen, 7.
538 Kamen, 8.
and the Future.  Women of their generation who are leading "revolutionary" lives, they claim, are associated with the tag line, "I'm not a feminist, but." They observed that Gen X women "have been seen as non feminist when they are actually leading feminist lives." Third Wave feminists, unlike the boomer "Second Wave" feminists before them, have reclaimed words like "girl," "bitch," "cunt," and "slut," and have repackaged them as mantras of empowerment. Activist groups like the Riot Grrrls led the way. Comprised of a group of young, punk, renegade women, they wrote such words on their bodies and used them as political statements. At their convention in 1992, a group of over one hundred Riot Grrrls gathered to protest "hatred of punks and kids who look different, classism, marginalization of sex workers, as well as sexism, racism, ableism, and homophobia."

In addition to the tough talking, sexually aggressive component of grrl power and Third Wave feminism, there is as well a more effeminate side to these constructs. "Girlie culture," often dismissed as ineffectual "lipstick" feminism, embraces femininity in a way that feels like a sellout to the women's rights activists of the 1970s. Baumgardner and Richards define it as follows:

In the same way that Betty Friedan's insistence on professional seriousness was a response to every woman in an office being called a girl, this generation is predestined to fight against the equally rigid stereotype of being too serious, too political, and seemingly asexual. Girlie culture is a rebellion against the false impression that since women don't want to be sexually exploited, they don't want to be sexual; against the necessity of brass-buttoned, red-suited seriousness to infiltrate a man's world; against the anachronistic belief that because women could be dehumanized by porn (and we include

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540 Baumgardner and Richards, 52.
541 Baumgardner and Richards, 78, 91.
eroticas in our definition), they must be; and the idea that girls and power don’t mix.\textsuperscript{542}

Although Baumgardner and Richards note that most people credit Betty Friedan for launching the modern feminist movement with \textit{The Feminine Mystique}, they instead acknowledge Helen Gurley Brown's \textit{Sex and the Single Girl} as being equally if not more relevant to the girlie feminist: "A little brunette called Helen Gurley Brown seems to be at the root of platinum-blond Girlie feminism, as much as a suburban intellectual named Betty Friedan was at the root of housewives' rebellion.\textsuperscript{543}

Magazines like \textit{Bust} typify the attitudes of the Third Wave feminist. \textit{Bust}, with its tag line "For women with something to get off their chests," dedicated its Spring 2001 issue to the "womanly arts." The issue featured Sarah Bernhard on the cover as a "Home Girl," and editor Debbie "Celina Hex" Stoller explained her decision:

When Betty Friedan wrote \textit{The Feminine Mystique} in 1963, she awakened the world to the fact that -- despite Donna Reed, streamlined vacuum cleaners, and flashy ads featuring dancing scrub brushes -- being a housewife wasn't all that. You'd figure that today, freed from the constraints of the home we modern gals would have no problem reaching our full human capacities. But after years of working 9 to 7 schedules, building careers that allow us to shop for racks of CDs or pair after pair of shoes, eating takeout for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, running to gym class and gallery openings, and lying alone in our queen-sized beds at night --- many of us are afraid to ask even of ourselves the same silent question -- "Is this all?"\textsuperscript{544}

She went on to argue that while she did appreciate her job and the ability to support herself, she had recently rediscovered the joys of domesticity. Stoller questioned why contemporary American society reveres traditionally male

\textsuperscript{542} Baumgardner and Richards, 137.
\textsuperscript{543} Baumgardner and Richards, 153-154.
\textsuperscript{544} Debbie "Celina Hex" Stoller, Editor in Chief, \textit{Bust}, Spring 2001, 4. Stoller resigned a few years later in order to spend more time with her baby.
activities but dismisses traditionally female ones as trivial. She wondered whether this was "internalized misogyny." In addition to articles on homemaking activities, the issue also contained features like "The Bad Girl's Guide to Good Housekeeping," and "Dirty Laundry: A Naked Maid Tells All." *Bust,* in fact, fully embraces female sexuality as liberation. The magazine is supported in large measure by advertising from sex toy companies and girlie record labels. Their good housekeeping guide opens with a photograph of a blonde bombshell in stockings, heels, and teddy happily sweeping dirt under a rug. At first glance this image seems puzzling and out of step with the magazine's biting, feminist rhetoric. However, like Third Wave feminists reclaiming the labels like "bitch" and "slut" and the use of erotic visuals of and for women puts them in charge of the labels and images. They are, in actuality, poking fun at exploitation, even if that humor is lost on many older Americans.

It is no wonder that Third Wave feminists look to sexually powerful media icons as role models when there are so few real life women heroines in the traditionally male-dominated worlds of business and politics. In 1991, law professor Anita Hill took a bold and brave stance during the confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, claiming that he sexually harassed her years before when he served as head of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. For her efforts, she was chastised by the Right, Thomas was ultimately confirmed by a predominately male Senate, and she was effectively humiliated. The event, however, ignited a resurgence of feminism. That, coupled with Clinton's election in 1992, provided a spark of hope for women that nonetheless proved to be short-lived. While Monica

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545 *Bust,* Spring 2001, 71.
Lewinsky was propelled to fame due to her association with President Bill Clinton, Hillary Rodham Clinton, America's first lady feminist, was not so fortunate. She was vilified by the media and the Right, forced to undergo a Betty Crocker makeover, and browbeaten into submission for trying to make a difference in American society and daring to play a role beyond that of faithful helpmate to her husband. Rather than being lauded for her election to the United States Senate, she was berated by the Right for riding on the coattails of her husband.

In an interview with Baumgardner and Richards in the *Northern California Bohemian*, reporter Tamara Straus further articulated why young women find it easy to be cynical about feminism:

> There are few women in government; a glass ceiling in the workplace, although wearing thin, still looms overhead; and perhaps most important of all, American women — though mostly free of the centuries' long economic dependence on men— are now hamstrung between the pressures of making money or pursuing a profession and raising children.547

In the article, Straus reiterated the main points in *Manifesta*. The authors' advocacy of girly feminism had not been well received by baby boomer feminists who felt girly feminists "make a mockery of feminism's longtime and still unachieved goals of social and economic equality." The authors argued that the two do not have to be mutually exclusive. Third Wavers "aspire to be Madonna, the woman who rose to fame as the ultimate virgin whore"; they "want to continue to fight for equal rights, but not to the detriment of their sexuality. They want to be both subject and object."548

What older feminists failed to realize is that women in the postfeminist era have learned to capitalize on their femininity and sexuality because of the roadblocks they faced trying to gain parity with men through traditional channels. Perhaps the most successful example of such a woman is Oprah Winfrey, and she rose to power without flaunting her sexuality. She did, however, build an empire around women's issues. In this way, girlie feminists, Third Wave feminists, or grrl power advocates -- whatever they may be called -- have a valid point. As male-dominated institutions like government and the higher echelons of business became impenetrable, as their aspirations were thwarted by unflattering portrayals of power-hungry women in the popular culture, women turned their energies to more fruitful and feminine endeavors.

Women like Oprah Winfrey, Madonna, Britney Spears, and Martha Stewart all circumvented the male power structure in distinctly female fashion. It seems natural that Third Wave feminists would, then, see femininity and female sexuality as empowering, despite the fact that older generation feminists do not seem to look at it this way. Baumgardner and Richards recently appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show, defending Manifesta and the validity of Third Wave feminism. They were joined by Naomi Wolf, Suzanne Braun Leaven, and a host of baby boom feminists. In "What Younger Women Think About Older Women," airing on April 18, 2002, the boomers admitted that they felt younger women were selling out the goals of feminism, particularly those who chose to be stay-at-home mothers. The younger Gen X women, although appreciative of the boomers' efforts, encouraged them to let go and turn the movement over to Winfrey, however, is the only one of the four who made the Forbes 400 list of richest people in America in 2003. At a net worth of 1.1 billion dollars, she ranks number 224. The list is still dominated by men. Most of the women who made the list were cited as gaining their wealth through inheritance or marriage. On the Forbes 2003 list of celebrity power, however, which ranks stars based on media exposure, popular appeal, and wealth, Spears ranked first, Madonna ranked fourth, and Winfrey ranked eleventh. See www.forbes.com/lists for more information.
a new generation. Women now had choices, they all agreed, and that was really
the goal of the movement. The show ended on a positive note, with all of the
women advocating more cross-generational dialogue.\textsuperscript{550} For Gen X women,
pluralism seems to be the order of the day regarding liberation; women can now
choose from a menu of options regarding sex, career, marriage, and family, and
build a lifestyle which suits them. This plurality seems finally to be transferring
to visual images of women, as a more diverse array of female body types
currently graces the products of popular culture.

Women like Oprah Winfrey helped move American media in that
direction. Over the years, Winfrey exposed her own insecurities about her body,
came to terms with them, and became a role model for American women
looking for alternatives to the dangerously sensual construct. Winfrey's
transformation likely served as a healing process for American women. Today,
her website includes an entire self-help section teaching women to accept their
bodies and to have a positive body image. As Naomi Wolf noted in the new
introduction to the 2002 printing of her book \textit{The Beauty Myth}, many instructive
changes have occurred since she wrote the book in 1991. Anorexia is no longer
thought of as a feminist fantasy disease. The National Health Institute has
confirmed that anorexia affects between one and a half to two million women,
and most schools provide training about the dangers of eating disorders.\textsuperscript{551} The
media now features a more diverse array of female prototypes regarding age,
weight, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. However, Wolf also noted that in
place of the "beauty myth" there is "an increasingly sexualized ideal that younger

\textsuperscript{550} "What Younger Women Think About Older Women," \textit{The Oprah Winfrey Show}, CBS, Harpo

\textsuperscript{551} Naomi Wolfe, \textit{The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women} (New York: Harper
and younger girls are beginning to feel they must live up to." Additionally, she contended that "the influence of pornography on women's sense of self" makes it impossible for younger women to create "their own innate sense of sexual identity." 

Ironically, a recent Newsweek article reported that in this era of the pornographic cultural landscape, American couples are having less sex. Psychologists estimate that fifteen to twenty percent of couples have sex no more than ten times per year, the cut-off point at which psychologists define a sexless marriage. Men are just as responsible for the downturn as women. A spate of self-help books have appeared recently, suggesting that this problem is quite widespread and perhaps underreported. Surveys, the authors hold, tend to be unreliable, as most people revert to the standard "once or twice a week" rather than embarrass themselves. The article posited that perhaps during the heyday of the sexual revolution, people came to mistake statistics regarding sexual potential for cultural norms. Today, programs like Sex and the City give Americans the impression that everyone is having more and better sex than they are. In effect, couples are suffering from a prolonged inferiority complex, or exhaustion, chasing after an elusive, fictional, blissful sexual relationship in the same way that conservatives have sought to resurrect the "traditional" American families which only existed on 1950s sitcoms. Couples are also exhausted, the article revealed. Two career couples and soccer mom families alike struggle to attend to the multiple details of postmodern American life, with children's schedules today resembling those of corporate executives from the 1950s. Both women who work and those who stay home report the problem in equal

552 Wolfe, 3.
553 Wolfe, 5.

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measure, suggesting that the demands of homemaking today are just as taxing as those in the workplace.\footnote{Kathleen Deveny, "We're Not In The Mood," Newsweek, 30 July 2003, on line at www.bulletin.ninemsn.com.}

There are also more pressing issues facing families in the world after September 11, 2001. A recent *Time* magazine article, "From Soccer Mom to Security Mom," suggested that female voters have changed their priorities since the terrorist attack. Women are now seeking power of a different sort. The article revealed that women's opinions changed more than men's after the attack on their homeland. Seventy-one percent of women surveyed say they are more concerned now about national security than they were before September 11, compared to fifty-nine percent of men. Currently, more men fear an economic downturn over another terrorist attack, but women continue to be more worried about terrorism. Security moms are advocating larger defense budgets over education and social programs, which is atypical for their demographic sector. Above all, mothers today want their children to be safe. The Democrats are paying close attention to this coveted swing voter, and they know that their platform will require some additional muscle in order to garner the support of America's new security mom.\footnote{Karen Tumulty and Viveca Novak, "Goodbye, Soccer Mom. Hello, Security Mom, Time, 25 May 2003, on line at www.time.com.}

The fact that American society is plagued with hawkish security moms and epidemics of sexless marriages would likely surprise many of America's enemies in the global terrorist diaspora. Women and girls as depicted in American popular culture may not fully reflect average, real-life females, but these images certainly have a cumulative impact that invites indignation in patriarchal societies around the globe. As Howard Rosenberg demonstrated in "Hollywood's Effect on Muslim World Attitudes," American values infiltrate
other cultures today like disease pathogens during the Columbian exchange, wiping out traditional values and replacing them with wanton American sensibilities. Many college students in the Middle East grew up watching shows like *Falcon Crest*, *Dallas*, *Knots Landing*, and *Friends*. One Cairo resident stated, "I don't think Hollywood directors are intentionally ruining our youth. But the damage is done." A student at American University in Cairo felt differently. She asserted that "the U.S. uses movies and TV to impose its values on other cultures." She pointed to her own Americanized clothing and that of her friends as evidence of the impact of American media. When Newton Minnow and the Kennedy administration in their 1960s naivété championed the potential of global television to spread American ideology around the world, they were at once prescient and prophetic. However, rather than fostering an acceptance of democratic capitalism and modernization, the globalization of American media produced a violent backlash against American cultural imperialism. One Egyptian journalism professor put it more pointedly: "Radical fundamentalism is a reaction to radical modernization exported by Hollywood."

Much of the criticism in the Islamic world focuses on the impact of American popular culture on women's values in their societies, and Barbie has become a symbol of all that is wrong with an "Americanized" world. Recently, Iran created Sara and Dara, chaste Islamic brother and sister dolls, in order to curtail the influence of Barbie. Toy seller Masoumeh Rahimi called Barbie "more harmful than an American missile," a modern Trojan horse smuggling American cultural values into Iran's pious society. Young girls playing with the "wanton" Barbie could grow up to reject Iranian values. Another merchant remarked, "Dara and Sara are strategic products to preserve our national identity. And of

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course, it is an answer to Barbie and Ken, which have dominated Iran's toy market." In Saudi Arabia, the criticism proved to be even more severe. The dolls are banned in the country, but they are available on the black market. The Saudi Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice warned, "Jewish Barbie dolls, with their revealing clothes and shameful postures, accessories, and tools are a symbol of decadence to the perverted West. Let us beware of her dangers and be careful." The Saudi anti-Barbie campaign included posters of Barbie with a photograph of a little Saudi girl commenting, "Mother, I want jeans, a low-cut shirt, and a swimsuit like Barbie."

Ironically, after America's invasion of Iraq, one of Saddam Hussein's family palaces revealed a larger-than-life Barbie painted on its doors. It seems the Muslim world enjoys a love-hate relationship with liberated, American women, and perhaps that is part of the problem. Third Wave feminists can, to some degree, feel vindicated about the power of girlie feminism: in societies which traditionally repress women, Barbie was the one female who could not be contained. The Barbie Revolution is going global, and if the liberation of women in American society has caused chaos and confusion within the nation, that may pale in comparison to the global impact of the dangerously sensual woman who threatens to wreak havoc around the world. In some perverse self-fulfilling prophecy, grl power may well prove itself the dangerously sensual force it was claimed to be centuries ago when genteel Enlightenment philosophy gave way to a violent and contagious revolutionary spirit.

557 "Muslim Dolls Tackle 'Wanton' Barbie," BBC News on line at news.bbc.co.uk, 5 March, 2002.
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