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Reexamining the 1950s American Housewife: How Ladies Home Journal Challenged Domestic Expectations During the Postwar Period

Margaret Bonaparte
Scripps College

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**REEXAMINING THE 1950s AMERICAN HOUSEWIFE: HOW THE
EDITORS AND WRITERS OF *LADIES HOME JOURNAL*
CHALLENGED DOMESTIC EXPECTATIONS DURING THE
POSTWAR PERIOD**

by

MARGARET RENEE LESLIE BONAPARTE

**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT
OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS IN HISTORY**

PROFESSOR LISS

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I am dedicating my thesis to my grandmother, Betty Hannah Hoffman. Without her, there would be no thesis. Growing up, I used to sit on her couch for hours flipping through her scrapbooks that were stuffed to the brim with the articles she had written for *Ladies Home Journal*. I always regarded her as my grandma that loved to paint and preferred her tea boiling hot, but this past year I saw a side of her I had never known. Here's to you, Grandma Hannah.

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| INTRODUCTION..... | 4 |
| CHAPTER ONE: <i>From Rosie the Riveter to the Glamorized 1950s Housewife</i> | 15 |
| CHAPTER TWO: <i>The Culture of ‘Ladies Home Journal’</i> | 39 |
| CHAPTER 3: <i>Working Female Journalists</i> | 59 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 85 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 89 |

INRODUCTION

The March 1952 issue of *Ladies Home Journal* featured a striking photograph of the youthful, green-eyed beauty Arvella Weir with her handsome husband Dick and their two-year-old triplets in front of a gleaming red fire truck.¹ The Weir family of Seattle, Washington was profiled for the popular monthly column “How America Lives.”² Married at age 18, Arvella soon became a mother. Dick worked as a local fireman, leaving Arvella confined to their small home with the babies. Dick fought overseas in Italy during World War II, and returned home to start a family and financially provide for his household. The Weirs initially resembled a typical domestic family with a home of their own. A closer examination, however, reveals complexities within this categorization.

While the accompanying photos by Morris Engel attempt to glamorize the young family, author Betty Hannah Hoffman uses specific language to complicate the domestic narrative. She hints at Arvella’s discontent as a housewife, writing that “the house resembles a whirling carousel of multiples of three: since the babies arrived two years ago, Arvella has practically never escaped from it.”³ Hoffman adds: “although she doesn’t look the part, Arvella is now resigned to the life thrust upon her.”⁴ The words “escaped” and “resigned” suggest that Arvella had greater ambitions than her current role as a mother laden down with diapers and housework. Indeed, Arvella maintains her dream of attending college once the triplets are older.⁵ She insisted on graduating from high school before marrying Dick. Towards the end of the article, Arvella reveals:

¹ See Figure I.

² Betty Hannah Hoffman, “How America Lives,” *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1952, 168.

³ Ibid, 168.

⁴ Ibid, 168.

⁵ Ibid, 169.

“Sometimes, I just get tired of being the mother of triplets. I’m an individual too.”⁶

Hoffman, a working mother herself, crafts the article to challenge societal ideals that expected women to find fulfillment solely in the home. She articulates Arvella’s frustrations, and validates her needs to nurture her individual self, separate from her role as a wife and mother. The article refuses to reduce the Weirs to the pervasive stereotype of a blissfully domestic family that permeated American culture in the postwar period.



Figure One: Morris Engel, “Three Little Weirs, all in a row,” *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1952, 168.

Women’s magazines in the United States traced their origins back to the middle of the nineteenth-century to *Godey’s Lady Book*, widely regarded as the first important magazine written for female readers. First published in 1830, the magazine swiftly accumulated 150,000 subscribers by 1860 under its female editor, Sarah Josepha Hale.⁷ While women’s magazines existed before Hale, she was the first woman to oversee one

⁶ Ibid, 180.

⁷ Nancy A Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers’ World* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 32

and insert her authentic voice as a female editor.⁸ Hale promoted a vision of educated women, “not so they could ‘encroach upon prerogatives of men,’ but so they could be better wives and homemakers.”⁹ Women’s magazines flourished alongside more general interest magazines during the “golden age” at the turn of the twentieth century in response to the growing middle-class. *Ladies Home Journal* emerged in 1883 and swiftly expanded to conquer a burgeoning market.¹⁰ Once the U.S Post Office introduced free rural delivery in 1898, women across the nation could receive and read magazines regardless of their location.¹¹ Most important, women’s magazines began to thrive because advertisers used them as a vehicle to reach female consumers.¹² The American middle-class rapidly expanded its purchasing power by 40% between 1910 and 1929, which represented a new influx of potential consumers.¹³ Magazines profited from a rapidly expanding consumer class with readily available funds. By the mid-1950s, over 60% of Americans enjoyed the trapping of a middle-class lifestyle, compared to 31% of Americans during the Great Depression.¹⁴

It is easy to classify women’s magazines as oppressive and dismissive of women’s independence, but *Ladies Home Journal* occupied an important place in defining women’s roles in the 1950s. By 1950, *Ladies Home Journal* reigned over its competitors as the leading women’s magazine with a monthly circulation of 4.7 million readers.¹⁵ The magazine held considerable influence over white, middle-class American

⁸ Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 2.

⁹ Nancy A Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers’ World*, 33.

¹⁰ Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 3.

A more expansive history of the formation of *Ladies Home Journal* can be found in the second chapter.

¹¹ Ibid, 12.

¹² Nancy A Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers’ World*, 36.

¹³ Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 12.

¹⁴ Nancy A. Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers’ World*, xi.

¹⁵ “Never Underestimate...” *Newsweek*, April 17, 1950, 64.

women. In an era before the Internet, magazines served an important role in providing both education and entertainment. Edited by a predominantly female staff, the *Journal* employed college-educated female journalists that were largely excluded from the male-dominated newsrooms of more general circulation magazines such as *Life*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*. Many of these journalists maintained successful careers at *Ladies Home Journal* while simultaneously marrying and raising children. Betty Hannah Hoffman, my own grandmother, graduated from Smith College in 1939 and spent over three decades writing for the *Journal* while she raised three children. She, along with her fellow writers and editors, subtly challenged the ideals of domesticity that emerged during the decade following World War II.

Ladies Home Journal became the target of contempt with the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. Friedan introduced herself as a typical American housewife, complete with a husband and three children. The book emerged out of a survey Friedan conducted with her Smith College classmates fifteen years after their 1942 graduation. The results revealed "a strange discrepancy between the reality of our lives as women and the image to which we were trying to conform, the image that I came to call the feminine mystique."¹⁶ Friedan wrote that her generation "learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights – the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for."¹⁷ Friedan, alongside her Smith classmates, had been taught to be the model American housewife, "in the pursuit of feminine fulfillment."¹⁸

¹⁶ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, (1963 repr., New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 50.

¹⁷ Ibid, 58.

¹⁸ Ibid, 72.

Friedan argued in her second chapter, “The Happy Housewife Heroine,” that women’s magazines hindered women and subjugated them as housewives. She blamed these magazines for creating and promoting “the proud and public image of the high-school girl going steady, the college girl in love, [and] the suburban housewife with an up-and-coming husband and a station wagon full of children.”¹⁹ Friedan claimed her own freelance work helped perpetuate the image of a happy housewife. She could no longer “fit the quiet desperation of so many women into the picture of the modern American housewife that I myself was helping to create” through her magazine articles.²⁰ Friedan combed through archives dating back to 1939 for the four major women’s magazines, *Ladies Home Journal*, *McCall’s*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Women’s Home Companion*, to support her argument of the idealized, feminine housewife. In conclusion, she claimed that by 1949, American women were told they could only find fulfillment as “the housewife-mother.”²¹ However, this argument simplifies the complexities women’s magazines represented during the 1950s. Her research ignores the countless articles that confronted the happy housewife narrative and advocated for women to exercise their voice in politics and to demand a place for themselves outside the home. Likewise, Friedan overlooked those “How America Lives” profiles that asserted mothers’ desire for independence. When she caustically dismissed *Ladies Home Journal* for perpetuating negative female stereotypes, Friedan underestimated the magazine’s important role in empowering female editors, writers, and readers.

¹⁹ Ibid, 80.

Friedan also briefly mentions that advertisements, books, and movies also helped shape this image, but she only specifically delves into the role women’s magazines played.

²⁰ Ibid, 80.

²¹ Ibid, 92.

The Feminine Mystique played an integral role shaping our understanding of postwar ideology, but emerging historiography in the past twenty years has revisited Friedan's seminal work and challenged her assumptions. Historian Joanne Meyerowitz contributed to a revisionist history by questioning "the stereotype of postwar women as quiescent, docile, and isolating" in her anthology *Not June Cleaver*, published in 1994.²² In her essay, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique," she tackled Friedan's claim that women's magazines only promoted a domestic lifestyle. Upon examining mass culture during the 1950s, Meyerowitz encountered books, articles, and films that contradicted the domestic ideology. She reexamined "the middle-class popular discourse on women by surveying mass-circulation monthly magazines of the postwar era" from 1946 to 1958.²³ In analyzing women's magazines, she found that many non-fiction articles "expressed overt admiration for women whose individual striving moved them beyond the home."²⁴ Meyerowitz argued that numerous non-fiction articles spread "an ethos of individual achievement" that "subverted domestic ideals."²⁵ She specifically identified *Ladies Home Journal* for supporting women as political and community leaders.²⁶ Meyerowitz embraced the contradictions that magazines offered, for they "included stories that glorified domesticity, but they also expressed ambivalence about domesticity, endorsed women's nondomestic activity, and celebrated women's success."²⁷ Read in their entirety, Meyerowitz argued women's magazines embraced the contradictions that women of the time experienced.

²² Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique," in *Not June Cleaver*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 250.

²³ Ibid, 230.

²⁴ Ibid, 231.

²⁵ Ibid, 238.

²⁶ Ibid, 240.

²⁷ Ibid, 251.

Historian Nancy A. Walker conducted an extensive study of American women's magazines in the 1940s and 1950s for her book *Shaping Our Mother's World*, published in 2000. Walker furthered Meyerowitz's claims that that these magazines both "celebrated woman's primary role as homemaker and at other times subverted that ideology."²⁸ Her work significantly contributed to the revisionist historiography that challenged simplistic views of women's magazines. Her study included *Ladies Home Journal*, but her focus largely ignored both the editors and writers that helped form the magazine.

Historian Daniel Horowitz further contributed to this revisionist history by investigating the complexities and contradictions within Betty Friedan herself in his extensive biography *Betty Friedan and the Making of 'The Feminine Mystique,'* published in 1998. He deconstructed the notion of Friedan as a mere housewife and traced her feminist theory back to her anti-fascism, radicalism, and labor union activities from the 1940s and early 1950s. The book begins with the birth of Bettye Goldstein in Peoria, Illinois on February 4, 1921. Her father, an immigrant from the Ukraine, ran a successful jewelry company while her mother remained home with Bettye and her two siblings.²⁹ When Bettye left home to attend Smith College in 1938, her peers "were everything [she] was not, graduates of private schools, from the East, Protestant, politically conservative or disengaged, and adorned with circle pins and Peter Pan collars."³⁰ Horowitz argues her status as an outsider propelled Bettye to excel in her classes and challenge her classmates. As a first year at Smith, Friedan overlapped with

²⁸ Nancy A. Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World*, ix.

²⁹ Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of the 'Feminine Mystique,'* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 16-7.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 43.

Hoffman – then going by her maiden name Betty Hannah - and worked selling ads for the literary magazine Hoffman oversaw as the editor-in-chief.³¹ A psychology major, Friedan went on to head the student newspaper and wrote impassioned editorials criticizing World War II before Pearl Harbor and advocating female workers' right to organize on campus. After graduating in 1942 with honors, Friedan dropped the "e" from her first name and entered U.C. Berkeley to pursue a doctorate in psychology. Friedan excelled her first year and became romantically entangled with a fellow graduate student, but withdrew after a year and fled to New York City alone.

According to Horowitz, the nine years Friedan spent in New York City as a labor journalist crusading for women and minorities, including Jews and African Americans, were crucial to understanding *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan attempted to erase her former identity as a labor journalist and presented herself as a housewife, but she participated in radical social and political movements during the 1940s. From 1943 to 1946, she was a Popular Front labor journalist for the Federated Press, but struggled to adjust to working under male editors who controlled the final decision.³² In July of 1946, Friedan switched over to UE News, the official publication of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America. Horowitz argues that Friedan married Carl Friedan in 1947 out of an unrequited desire to marry she had harbored since her days in Peoria, only to realize that her husband did not "share her dream of an egalitarian marriage, her aspirations to combine career and family, or her political passions."³³ Friedan left UE News in 1952 as her husband pushed her back into the home with her children while he worked in advertising. She hustled to freelance for various magazines

³¹ Betty Hannah Hoffman, "Roving Reporter," (unpublished manuscript, Pacific Grove, 2006), 1.

³² Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of the 'Feminine Mystique,'* 103-4.

³³ Ibid, 132.

before achieving moderate success in 1955 as magazines began printing her articles.³⁴ When she began writing *The Feminine Mystique*, Horowitz argues that she deliberately represented a selective version of herself to readers, which in turn “made it possible for white suburban readers to identify with the author and thereby enhanced the book’s appeal.”³⁵

My thesis explores the role *Ladies Home Journal* played in shaping the domestic landscape that emerged after World War II by examining the articles and the women who wrote them. When husband and wife Bruce and Beatrice Gould assumed the role as co-editor-in-chiefs in 1935, they helped shape the *Journal* into a powerhouse of dynamic women that worked as editors, staff writers, and contributors.³⁶ The magazine weathered World War II and entered the 1950s as the top-circulated women’s magazine. The Goulds wielded enormous influence over their readers, and contributed to shaping public opinions about women and their role in society. An examination of *Journal* articles from the middle of the twentieth-century significantly complicates and alters our understanding of gender roles. Stereotypes from the 1950s represent women as housewives fawning over their husbands, but the *Journal* portrayed strong, inspiring women that participated in local politics, built careers, and questioned narrow definitions of domesticity. Moreover, the magazine’s female employees represented tangible examples of strong, working women who often balanced their careers with family life.

Divided into three chapters, the thesis begins by tracing shifting cultural attitudes towards female employment from the 1940s to the 1950s that contextualize *Ladies Home Journal*’s place in society during the 1950s. World War II enabled millions of women to

³⁴ Ibid, 180.

³⁵ Ibid, 2.

³⁶ Nancy A. Walker, *Shaping Our Mother’s World*, 60-1.

enter the workforce and gain financial independence. Between 1940 and 1945, the female labor force in the United States increased by 50%.³⁷ The *Journal* actively covered this influx of female workers, and profiled several female “Rosie the Riveter” wartime workers as well the Woman’s Army Auxiliary Corps. Many women lost their wartime jobs once veterans returned and demanded back their old jobs, but they retained a foothold in the workplace. A third of American women worked during the 1950s, but many fields were gendered and discriminated against female workers. In this hostile working environment, female workers populated the offices of *Ladies Home Journal*. My second chapter unearths the culture of *Ladies Home Journal* by examining the editors, writers, and articles. The *Journal* profiled both working women and housewives, often in the same issue, throughout the 1950s. The magazine simultaneously operated as a haven for talented women seeking employment and offered a safe, supportive, and lucrative working environment. My third and final chapter examines three journalists, Dorothy Thompson, Maureen Daly, and Betty Hannah Hoffman who all regularly contributed to the *Journal*. All three women graduated from college and pursued careers in journalism. Thompson gained the most fame as an international news correspondent with a daily syndicated newspaper column, but both Daly and Hoffman enjoyed long and prosperous careers. These women contributed to a largely ignored history that complicated the stereotype of domesticity.

Popular culture in the 1950s feminized women and portrayed them as beautiful housewives with shiny new cars and newly built homes in the suburbs, but my investigative study of *Ladies Home Journal* revealed a more complicated picture. The

³⁷ Elaine Tyler May, “Rosie the Riveter Gets Married,” in *The War and American Culture*, ed. Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 130.

magazine's office teemed with intelligent and hardworking women who worked together to produce each issue. They reached a broad audience of over four and half million readers, and both educated and encouraged their female readers to retain their individualism and pursue their own desires and dreams. Every month, millions of American readers received *Ladies Home Journal* in their mailbox. These issues often gained a second life as neighbors passed them around. *Ladies Home Journal* aimed to inspire, entertain, and enchant its readers.

CHAPTER ONE

From Rosie the Riveter to the Glamorized Housewife

W.K. Jordan, the male president of the esteemed all female Radcliffe College, addressed incoming first years during the 1950s by assuring the women that their college education “would prepare them to be splendid wives and mothers and their reward might be to marry Harvard men.”¹ His speech made clear that the young American women should view their education as a pathway to meeting a spouse with impressive economic prospects. The Boston banker and philanthropist Arthur Gilman originally founded Radcliffe in 1879 as an annex to Harvard to enable the patrician daughters of elite Bostonians to receive an education from Harvard professors.² His vision differentiated Radcliffe from the leading women’s colleges by solely focusing on an exemplary education. The more established Wellesley College and Vassar College offered a community to their students in addition to a B.A. degree. By 1893, the Radcliffe annex became an accredited women’s college and adopted more traditional women’s college trappings by building brick quads and dormitories and fostering both academics and social gatherings.³ Half a century later, marriage became a central facet of college life. The impressionable Cliffies heard similar sentiments throughout their college years, as did their female peers that matriculated into colleges and universities throughout the United States.

In the decade following World War II, ambitious, middle- and upper-class women entered a privileged, strictly gendered educational environment that hindered career aspirations. By 1956, twenty-five percent of urban white women had married before graduating college.⁴ College campuses offered married student housing, essentially

¹ Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009), 57.

² Helen Horowitz, *Alma Mater* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1984), 95.

³ *Ibid*, 100.

⁴ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 78.

enabling young college women to marry a fellow undergraduate and drop out while he pursued his degree.⁵ Rather than viewing college as an opportunity to gain a degree and pursue a career, college administrators encouraged these women to view higher education as an entryway into a stable household. This emphasis on marriage developed out of a fear at the turn of the century that college-educated women eschewed marriage. The women's college Bryn Mawr, founded in 1885, found that 55% of graduates from the first few classes abstained from marriage, whereas only 11% of American women abstained from marriage.⁶ These statistics showed a sharp divide between college-educated women and their uneducated counterparts.

The postwar period gender ideals that placed women in the home traced their origins back to the nineteenth-century when women acted as vassals of morality in the domestic sphere. Historian Barbara Welter argued that husbands, neighbors, and society judged a woman's true femininity on the four cardinal virtues piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.⁷ Without purity, a woman "was, in fact, no woman at all, but a member of some lower order."⁸ Men expected women to submit to their husbands' desires and wills, as "men were the movers, the doers, [and] the actors" while "[w]omen were the passive, submissive responders."⁹ Debates swirled during the middle of the nineteenth century over the role of women's education, and many men worried an education would divert women away from their domestic duties as housewives. These gendered expectations persisted through the following century.

⁵ Ibid, 79.

⁶ Helen Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 280.

⁷ Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966), accessed December 10, 2013, *JSTOR*, 152.

⁸ Ibid. 154.

⁹ Ibid, 159.

American lower- and middle-class women experienced a momentous shift in cultural attitudes towards female employment during World War II when droves of women entered the workforce to fill the jobs men left behind. The war enabled millions of women to enter the workforce and earn a steady salary of their own independent of men. Notably, many worked in male-dominated factory jobs. As women entered factories and enlisted in the Woman's Army Auxiliary Corps, women's magazines covered these developments and fostered support for female employment. Women received a stream of encouragement to enter the workforce on behalf of their country, but the subsequent decade pushed women outside of the workplace as veterans returned home to resume their former professions. Out of necessity women retreated to more feminine job fields, including teachers, nurses, and typists. While the postwar period attempted to exclude women from the workplace, white middle- and upper-class female journalists continued to build careers with stable salaries and opportunities for advancement. The female journalists that contributed to these magazines complicate our understanding of both wartime work and domesticity that permeated American culture.

World War II marked a significant shift in American culture as the war impacted multiple facets of everyday life and fundamentally challenged previous notions about gender in the workplace. The war arrived in the midst of the Great Depression, during a time when the unemployment rate of Americans hovered around fourteen percent.¹⁰ In 1941, over forty percent of American families continued to live below the poverty rate. Gender inequalities remained high during the depression, when white women made 61 cents to every dollar white men earned. Black women fared far worse, earning 23 cents to

¹⁰ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 59.

every dollar a white man earned.¹¹ Once the bombing of Pearl Harbor drew the United States into the war, the American economy experienced a resurgence as the war created millions of new jobs.

World War II offered an opportunity for women to capitalize on an idea of gender equality that had been thwarted during the depression.¹² Middle- and-upper-class white women had fought valiantly for women's rights at the turn of the century, only to watch their efforts crumble in the wake of the depression.¹³ The government-sponsored New Deal attempted to alleviate unemployment hardships, but the New Deal undercut women's employment opportunities in the process of aiding men's employment. The Economy Act of 1932, Section 213 mandated that female employees married to government employees would be the first to lose their jobs. As a result, the federal government dismissed sixteen hundred female employees. The rest of the country emulated the federal policy, and in three out of four states schools refused to hire female teachers.¹⁴ By 1940, only 15% of married women worked outside the home.¹⁵ That same year, almost 30% of all women were employed, but the majority toiled in low-paying occupations. Many working wives were ostracized, as a 1939 Gallup poll revealed that 90% of men indicated "women should not hold a job after marriage."¹⁶ In the midst of this gender inequality, the United States entered World War II, effectively ending the Great Depression as the unemployment rate fell from 14% to nearly 0%.¹⁷ Ideas about

¹¹ Ibid, 41.

¹² Ibid, 59.

¹³ Ibid, 51.

¹⁴ Ibid, 49.

¹⁵ Ibid, 49.

¹⁶ Ibid, 51.

¹⁷ Ibid, 59.

working women dramatically shifted after the war displaced millions of able bodied young men from their respective jobs across the country.

The U.S. government actively recruited female workers during the war after realizing the army would flounder abroad without well-stocked manufacturing plants stateside. Maureen Honey traces national efforts to draw women into the workplace in her monograph *Creating Rosie the Riveter*. Wartime pamphlets and advertisements explicitly created separate campaigns to attract middle-class women versus working-class women. Female workers became “a symbol of the ideal home-front spirit, standing for national unity, dedication to the cause, and stoic pursuit of victory.”¹⁸ Once women began holding higher paid jobs previously held by men, they earned better benefits and higher wages. By virtue of holding jobs in a traditionally masculine field, female war workers explicitly challenged “traditional notions about femininity and female limitations.”¹⁹ Suddenly a woman could competently operate heavy machinery and rise at dawn to start her grueling day in the factory.

Magazines played a contradictory role in promoting female wartime workers, as employers and the media encouraged women to enter the workforce and contribute to the war effort, but simultaneously forbade them from compromising their domestic duties.²⁰ Working women were expected to return home and tend to the housework, cooking, and child rearing while their husbands remained exempt from domestic chores. Whereas 80% of Americans objected to wives’ employment during the depression, only 13% held

¹⁸ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts, 1984), 6.

¹⁹ Ibid, 1.

²⁰ Elaine Tyler May, “Rosie the Riveter Gets Married” in *The War and American Culture*, ed. Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 136.

on to their objections in 1942.²¹ This radical shift in ideology enabled more wives to enter the workforce, and by the end of WWII 25% of wives were employed, a significant jump from the 15% employed at the end of the 1930s.²² The majority of married working women were older, having already raised their children through school. Notably, young married women made the smallest gains in employment during the war. Employers purposely ensured daycare centers were scarce, and expected young wives to stay home to tend to their children. In 1943, federal funds for daycare centers surfaced, but even then only provided care for ten percent of those who needed them.²³ *The Ladies Home Journal*, along with other influential magazines during the war, faced pressure from the federal government to portray female workers in the right light. This often translated into celebrating their patriotic work while subtly pushing women out of the workplace after WWII. From July of 1942 to April of 1945, the Magazine Bureau published a monthly Magazine War Guide for editors to follow that expected them to promote positive wartime values.²⁴

An August 1942 issue of *Ladies Home Journal* illustrated the contradictions present in promoting wartime work while upholding female femininity. In the article “This Changing World For Women,” four attractive young women work the assembly line to build Martin bombers for the war effort. Co-written by Ruth Matthews and Betty Hannah, the two female writers indirectly worked on behalf of the war effort by promoting strong, female wartime workers.²⁵ The first photograph in the spread shows

²¹ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 59.

²² Elaine Tyler May, “Creating Rosie the Riveter,” in *The War and American Culture*, 130.

²³ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 67.

²⁴ Nancy A. Walker, “Introduction: Women’s Magazines and Women’s Roles,” 15-6.

²⁵ When Betty Hannah married in 1942, she adopted her married name “Hoffman”. Her subsequent articles appear under the pen name “Betty Hannah Hoffman.”

20-year old Marjory Kurtz, 22-year-old Margaret Kennedy, 24-year-old Tommy Joseph, and 30-year-old Virginia Drummond triumphantly waving their paychecks in the air.²⁶ Only a year before, factory managers had restricted assembly work to men. The women previously held traditionally female jobs, including secretarial work and running a beauty shop. The article explicitly praises the women for doing masculine work, and emphasizes the evident pride of the plant owner Glenn L. Martin. Martin holds his female workers to high expectations, warning them: “You’ll work night shifts if you have to. You’ll work six days a week, but you’ll get overtime pay. Do your best and we’ll get the best we can give you.” Indeed, both Kurtz and Kennedy worked the nighttime shift from 12:30 am to 8:15 am. Martin tells his workers: “You are as important as a soldier in the front ranks. You can save, or cost a life.”²⁷ The authors editorialize that Joseph, whose husband was fighting overseas in the South Pacific, has “the chance to work desperately hard at the one thing she’s sure will help bring beloved Joe back to her side.”²⁸ The women faced a pressured environment at work, where “one slip can mean thousands of dollars of damage and perhaps a flier’s life.” Of the four hundred female employees, 80% worked on the “small parts” assembly line, and only 3-5% percent were engineers and inspectors. The article strategically excluded any female engineers or inspectors, which suggests the editors classified those professions as too masculine for a woman. The contradictions present in the article indicated a prevalent national ideology that recognized the need for female workers during the war, but feared their inclusion in the workplace would irrevocably alter gender roles.

²⁶ Ruth Matthews and Betty Hannah, “This Changing World for Women,” *Ladies Home Journal*, August 1942, 27.

²⁷ Ibid, 27.

²⁸ Ibid, 28.

In the article “This Changing World For Women,” the female authors interweave observations and vignettes throughout that enable the four women to preserve their femininity and reinforce the hope that the women will marry and retreat from the workforce once the men come home. The female workers “proudly wear bright nail polish,” but “their hands are red and sore from handling countless nuts, screws, and bolts.”²⁹ They fret about dates and grouch over early wakeup calls.



Figure Two: Stuart, “How do the men feel about women workers?” *Ladies Home Journal*, August 1942, 27.

An accompanying photograph, figure two, shows two pretty women, dressed in impeccably pressed slacks and crisp, tucked-in blouses, walking past a row of their fellow male workers slumped against lockers. The photographed Drummond and Joseph laughed off the “wolf call” in the accompanying caption.³⁰ The caption refers to the two

²⁹ Ibid, 28.

³⁰ Ruth Matthews and Betty Hannah, “This Changing World for Women,” *Ladies Home Journal*, 27.

women as “girls,” despite their respective ages of 24 and 30. Viewed in a more modern frame of reference, the caption appears to make light of the elicited catcalls, but this image must be examined within the context of 1942. The photographer deliberately portrayed the women as objects of sexual desire, and implicitly reassured them that men still admired them. While the two female writers praise the women working, the article concludes with the assumption the women will dutifully resign from their wartime jobs once the war ends. In reality, a government poll conducted during the war revealed that 80% of women in postproduction plants wanted to be rehired at comparable wages after the war. Notably, 50% of those women identified as homemakers before the war.³¹ The two female authors themselves worked throughout the war for *Ladies Home Journal* and continued their careers after the war.

Single women composed a strong, substantial component of wartime workers that threatened to complicate stringent attitudes towards sexual liberty and normative gender roles. Employment recruiters fretted over the possibility for sexual promiscuity, warning in one wartime pamphlet: “In her new independence she must not lose her humanness as a woman. She may be the woman of the moment, but she must watch her moments.”³² The pamphlet acknowledges the humanness of women, but immediately asserts that identity comes with restrictions by implying a proper woman would never engage in sexual dalliances before marriage. However, wartime work offered women independence and sexual freedom. Despite the societal pressure to remain abstinent, over half of young people had sex during the 1940s.³³ Fears circulated that the women would embrace their freedom and reject marriage, but records indicate that marriage rates increased during the

³¹ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 11.

³² Elaine Tyler May, “Rosie the Riveter Gets Married,” in *The War and American Culture*, 133.

³³ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 109.

war.³⁴

The recruitment tactics of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps reflected a desire to actively attract young, single women that would be subject to unfair stipulations based on their gender. The female director of the WAAC (later shortened to WAC), Oveta Culp Hobby proclaimed that women "are carrying on the glorious tradition of American womanhood...in a war which makes no distinctions between men and women."³⁵ In an allegedly equal army, the generals denied female recruits access to birth control while providing male recruits with ample contraceptives. The WAAC required potential candidates of "excellent character" to pass an intelligence exam, and forbade recruits with children under the age of fourteen. Men could enlist in the Armed Forces regardless of the age of their children. Women under age eighteen could enlist in the WAVES (Women Appointed for Voluntary Emergency Service), but a birth mandated an "honorary discharge."³⁶ The WAAC strategically rejected young mothers in an effort to ensure the general public that mothers would remain mothers.

The armed services strived to portray female recruits as feminine and delicate, as illustrated in multiple advertisements. The September 11, 1944 issue of *Life* featured a WAAC advertisement with a young, pretty woman wearing an army helmet and a bright smile with the slogan "I'd rather be with them – than waiting for them" as she boards a boat. If she had remained in the home she would be left "thinking up things to make the time go by – listening to the news – wondering when it'll all be over."³⁷ This young woman chose to take an active role in the fight for freedom, but the WAC hoped she

³⁴ Ibid, 70.

³⁵ Ibid, 70.

³⁶ Ibid, 70-1.

³⁷ Women's Army Corps, Advertisement, September 1944, *Life*.

would graciously step down from her post once the war ended. The following month, another WAC advertisement showed up among the pages of the October 2, 1944 issue of *Life*. A slim, pretty brunette wearing an army suit looked off into the distance with the slogan “Mine eyes have seen the glory...” She sported red lipstick and styled curls. The accompanying text informs the reader that she has a brother fighting in New Guinea and another in Germany while her fiancé is a bomber pilot in Burma. Being a WAAC enables her to contribute to the glorious fight for freedom, for she states: “I’ve seen, with my own eyes, that doing my own special Army job is the real way to share *their* honor, and *their* glory.”³⁸ She maintains her femininity both in the photograph and through her identity as a woman engaged to be married. The inclusion of her fiancé implies that the WAAC assumed she intended to retreat to the household once her man returned home, for patriarchal gender norms equated marriage with an exodus from the workplace for women. The woman posed no threat to American working culture as long as she implicitly agreed to leave the workforce once the men returned home.

The January 1943 issue of *Ladies Home Journal* showed support for women in leadership positions by highlighting the achievements of 23-year-old WAAC officer in training Mary Johnson. Written by Betty Hannah Hoffman, who wrote the article on four Rosie the Riveters the year prior, the article profiles Johnson as one of the nation’s “girls in uniforms.” Hoffman drew women into the fold by making World War II her war as much as her brother’s or boyfriend’s, for “she knows to the aching depths of her heart what kind of war this is. It isn’t for boundaries, for profit or loot. It’s her war. Her men are sacrificing their lives for everything she loves and believes in.”³⁹ The article makes

³⁸ Women’s Army Corps, Advertisement, October 1944, *Life*.

³⁹ Betty Hannah Hoffman, “Our Girls in Uniform,” *Ladies Home Journal*, January 1943, 63.

sharp distinctions between Mary's present life and her life before training camp, and begins by reminiscing about her privileged summer the year before "gaily dancing at the clubhouse near her family's cool cottage on Lake Champlain" as a blithe 23-year old. A year later, her summer consists of oppressively hot early mornings in a raw-lumber building in Iowa while she completes her eight-week army training. Now, "swirling summer gowns had given way to the heavy khaki twill that soldiers call 'chino,' high-heeled silver slippers to G.I. oxfords," and so forth.⁴⁰ After an idyllic childhood in New York, Thompson maintained a B average at Sweet Briar College before trading in her dancing shoes to enlist in the WAAC. She was one of nine chosen for the first WAAC officer-training group. The sergeants push the women to train as hard as the men, and one sergeant said: "Go easy on em? Why would we? These girls of ours can do darn near anything a man can – and usually better."⁴¹ Johnson became a Third Officer and defied gendered expectations that posited women could not hold leadership positions in the army. Upon receiving her new title, she expressed her evident pride: "I sure felt that this was it!"⁴² In a refreshing twist, the article steered away from boyfriends and fiancés, and granted Johnson the spotlight.

Once the soldiers returned home and disrupted the workforce, employers ostracized women as they struggled to find employment. Between 1940 and 1945 the female labor force increased by 50%, but many employers promptly fired women from their factory jobs to manufacture room for returning veterans. Once the numbers are further dissected, only 28% of females were employed at the beginning of the war, while

⁴⁰ Ibid, 64.

⁴¹ Ibid, 65.

⁴² Ibid, 65.

at the end of the war 36% were employed.⁴³ Women counted for 36% of the entire American civilian workforce during the war. While Rosie the Riveter campaigns advertised well-paying, union protected jobs, most of the women entering the workforce were segregated into low-paying, sex-segregated jobs. Over two million women left their jobs after the war, largely out of force rather than personal choice. Within a short time period women's average weekly pay plummeted by 26%, dropping from \$50 a week to \$37 a week. Nationally, the weekly pay rate remained relatively steady, dropping a mere 4%.⁴⁴

During the war, *Life* magazine devoted countless articles to American soldiers and wartime issues and strived to reassure soldiers they had an American home to return to. *Life* magazine dedicated the September 25, 1944 issue to American soldiers, and addressed its editorial article to the G.I.s with the heading "When You Come Back."⁴⁵ The editorial assuaged veterans' fears about returning stateside by mapping out the benefits of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly referred to as the G.I. Bill of Rights. The Bill applied to both men and women of the armed services, but only those with an "other than dishonorable" discharge qualified.⁴⁶ In addition to providing unemployment checks, the Bill guaranteed them their old job back. Elaine Tyler May draws the connection between a nation that felt indebted to its veterans and increasingly limited job opportunities for women after the war, for employers strived to "preserve a place for men." Over sixteen million men served in World War II, and many feared the

⁴³ Elaine Tyler May, "Rosie the Riveter," in *The War and American Culture*, 130.

⁴⁴ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 75.

⁴⁵ "When You Come Back." *Life*, September 25, 1944, 53.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 54-5.

imminent prospect of unemployment.⁴⁷ Women became marginalized as the nation's veterans became heralded as heroes.

The media aided this mentality, and throughout the war general interest magazines included articles that minimized women's independence and reduced them to faithful fawning girlfriends and fiancés eagerly awaiting their soldier's safe return. The same issue of *Life*, dedicated to the GIs, profiled the handsome 19-year old Bill Eder fighting in the navy while his picturesque family eagerly awaited his return in Indianapolis in their "two-story stucco house on Good Avenue." The heading states: "Home: It's the same as ever."⁴⁸ The oldest of five, Bill's father works as the wire chief at the Western Union office while his mother eagerly waits for the mail twice a day for news from her son. An enlarged photograph features a young woman adorned with blonde curls smiling seductively inside a car with the accompanying text: "Family car will be waiting for Bill when he comes home. So will Lois Bardwell, one of the girls he used to date."⁴⁹ The article makes no other mention of Bardwell, and reduces her to a pretty young woman bending to Bill's wishes.

The conclusion of World War II positioned white American men and women to enter a burgeoning new middle-class society that reinforced the ideal of men as breadwinners and women as homemakers. The newly enacted Servicemen's Readjustment Act (G.I. Bill) underwrote a newfound prosperity, as illustrated in Suzanne Metler's monograph *Soldiers to Citizens*. The Bill impacted a vast percentage of the American population, for over 80% of American men born in the 1920s became military

⁴⁷ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 76.

⁴⁸ "Home: It's the same as ever," *Life*, September 25, 1944, 87.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 89.

veterans.⁵⁰ Many of those men subsequently benefited from the Bill. Under the Bill, veterans qualified for unemployment benefits of \$20 a week for a year. Veterans cashed in unemployment checks for an average of 19.7 weeks.⁵¹ The Bill's two most significant benefits financially supported veterans to receive higher education and purchase a home of their own. The Bill granted one year of education to veterans who served ninety days, and an additional month of education for each additional month served. This amounted to \$500 a year and \$75 a month for personal expenses. Veterans wasted no time enrolling in colleges across the country, and nearly half of all college students were veterans by 1947. Over 51% of veterans used the education benefits.⁵² The U.S. federal government essentially funded a college education for 7.8 million veterans, and by 1955 the federal government had spent a total of 14.5 billion dollars on education and training. In addition to a college education, the government promised to match any loans up to "\$4,000 made for the purchase of a home, farm or establishment of a business" to all veterans who had served a minimum of ninety days.⁵³ Over 4.3 million veterans purchased homes using low-interest rates, and an additional 200,000 veterans brought farms or businesses.⁵⁴ Suburbs sprouted up across the nation as veterans suddenly had the financial ability to purchase a home of their own and start a family. Men assumed their role as primary breadwinners that had been thwarted during the depression while women watched their advances made during the war slowly crumble as their husbands expected them to remain in the home. While veterans made up half of the college population, women enrolled in

⁵⁰ Suzanne Metler, *Soldiers to Citizens* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.

⁵¹ Ibid, 6.

⁵² Ibid, 6.

⁵³ "When You Come Back, *Life*, 53.

⁵⁴ Suzanne Metler, *Soldiers to Citizens*, 7.

vastly smaller numbers.⁵⁵ The Bill's initiatives purposely created strict gender roles that hindered women's roles and identities.

The baby boom spread its seeds during the war as couples across the nation began marrying younger and having babies at a rapid pace. May argues that "the next generation symbolized hope for the future" to a nation struggling to heal its fresh war wounds."⁵⁶ The spiked birth rates during the 1940s effectively reversed two centuries of fertility decline, and would continue into the 1950s. The average number of babies each couple had only increased moderately, from 2.4 children in the 1930s to 3.2 children in the 1950s, but suddenly vast numbers of couples were having babies and choosing to have them sooner than their parents had.⁵⁷

While women wrestled with sexual decisions during their college years, societal pressures urged them to graduate and center their life around family. These expectations surfaced in a 1950 *Life* magazine feature on the graduating class of Scripps College, a women's liberal arts college in southern California. In 1956, women made up over a third of college students nationwide.⁵⁸ These numbers represent substantial progress for women's education, as only 3,000 American women attended college in 1870.⁵⁹ In the *Life* article, the women frolic along the immaculate grounds in the accompanying photographs under the headline "Romantic Graduation." Of the fifty graduating seniors, seven were already married, eleven were engaged, and one married her Pomona sweetheart the day after commencement. The unnamed journalist wrote that campus

⁵⁵ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 77.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 130.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 131.

⁵⁸ "Tough Training Ground for Women's Minds," *Life*, December 24, 1956, 102.

⁵⁹ Helen Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 56.

“look[ed] more like a setting for a schoolgirl romance than for a scholarship.”⁶⁰ The women must cross the street to the co-ed Pomona or Claremont Men’s College to study the more masculine disciplines of math, science, and economics. Only ten of the graduates expressed interest in pursuing a career, and many will find their options severely limited.



Figure Three: “Late for Graduation,” *Life*, June 26, 1950, 45.

Gail Collins contextualizes the oppressive culture these Scripps graduates, along with countless other women, faced during the 1950s in her monograph *When Everything Changed*. As for the ten Scripps women pursuing careers, law schools and medical schools only admitted a sliver of female candidates every year. One medical school dean admitted in 1961: “Hell yes, we have a quota. Yes, it’s a small one. We do keep women out, when we can. We don’t want them here – and they don’t want them elsewhere either, whether or not they’ll admit it.”⁶¹ The dean’s statement explains the structural gender

⁶⁰ “Romantic Graduation.” *Life*, June 26, 1950, 45

⁶¹ Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed*, 20.

bias inherent in hospitals and medical practices that manifested in medical schools.

Four years after the Scripps graduation, *Life* magazine featured the East Coast all female Bryn Mawr college in an article entitled “Tough Training Ground for Women’s Minds” in December of 1956. The author, again unnamed, wrote that the “women are given some of the most intensive intellectual training available in any college in the U.S.” The author appears to suggest that the students embody a great change in American women who are “concerned with problems beyond homemaking and livelihood.”⁶² A photograph showed the female students taking a chemistry class with a female associate professor, but the article also reported the two most popular majors to be History and English. Moreover, “skirts must be worn to classes, dinner, and off campus,” which suggests lingering elements of strict gender roles and formality.⁶³

Thorny sexual politics played an important role in facilitating younger couples to marry, as many Americans frowned upon women engaging in sex before marriage. In November of 1957, Smith alumna Nora Johnson published a seminal article on sexual politics in American colleges entitled “Sex and the College Girl.”⁶⁴ Barely three years out of college herself, Johnson lived in New York City with her husband and small daughter at the time of the article’s publication. She balanced her wifely duties with a budding reputation as a published author. *The New York Times* featured Johnson’s engagement to Leonard Siwek in October of 1954, following on the heels of her 1954 graduation from Smith College.⁶⁵ Johnson appears to have fit the ideal wife, managing to snag an accomplished WWII vet with a degree from Northwestern for a husband.

⁶² “Tough Training Ground for Women’s Minds,” *Life*, December 24, 1956, 102.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 107.

⁶⁴ Nora Johnson “Sex and the College Girl.” *The Atlantic*, November 1, 1957, 1.

⁶⁵ “Troth Announced of Nora Johnson.” *The New York Times*, October 31, 1954.

Johnson grew up during the war and came of age in the postwar period. Her engagement's inclusion in the *Times* implicitly indicates her high social status, and the notice highlights her wealthy New York upbringing. The editors of the *The Atlantic* selected Johnson, a privileged young white woman, to write on the "puzzling" predicament of the female undergraduate wrestling with marriage and parenthood.⁶⁶ Johnson ruminates on her generation's "constant search for self-identity," and attempts to respond to rampant criticism of promiscuity and premature marriages on college campuses. Johnson adeptly points out the inherent contradiction in the two claims, for "[t]he phenomena of pinning, going steady, and being monogamous-minded do not suggest sexual promiscuity."⁶⁷ She suggests that it is far easier for a young woman to "[go] steady" with a fellow co-ed than to tread delicately through the politics of promiscuity. She recounts feeling "rather like a display in a shop window" during her first few weeks at Smith as "boys from Amherst, Yale, Williams and Dartmouth swarmed over the campus in groups, looking over the new freshmen for the one girl that they could tie up for the next eight Saturday nights, the spring prom, and a house party in July." Johnson daringly suggests the majority of couples remain entangled out of boredom and convenience, and cautions "it is so easy to become tied up with old Joe, even though he is rather a bore, and avoid those nightmarish Saturday nights home with the girls."⁶⁸ Young women struggled to balance their sexual desires with cultural norms about premarital sex.

A code of sexual containment permeated American society after the war that expected young women to exercise sexual restraint.⁶⁹ Alfred Kinsey, best known for his

⁶⁶ Nora Johnson, "Sex and the College Girl," 1.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 2.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 2.

⁶⁹ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 112.

research on human sexuality, found that almost half the men he surveyed in 1953 preferred to marry a virgin, but at the same time the majority of those men did not believe premarital sex was morally wrong. Kinsey found that 50% of white women (regardless of education) had engaged in premarital intercourse while 68% of white college educated men had engaged in premarital intercourse.⁷⁰ Despite these numbers, a code of sexual containment persisted that promised delayed sexual gratification to those who waited until marriage. While the code failed to actually guarantee security or sexual fulfillment, many submitted to the code out of fear and shame.⁷¹ Johnson's fictional young woman fears the shame of premarital sex, and admits she has "done some heavy petting with boys she didn't care about, because she reasoned that it wouldn't matter what they thought of her," but she resists sexual Joe because "she wanted him to respect her."⁷² Moreover, she fears the shame of an unexpected pregnancy, having heard unreliable stories about birth control and the horrors of illegal abortions. Despite the potentially revolutionary power of the birth control movement, American society limited its acceptable use to married couples. Several Christian churches endorsed the contraceptives for family planning, but many doctors still refused to write prescriptions for single women. American society "was not ready to accept its potential for liberating sex outside marriage or liberating women from childbearing to enable them to pursue careers outside the home."⁷³ Johnson's female character wrestles with her inner desires, Joe's desires, and external pressures before engaging "in every possible kind of petting without actually having had intercourse," which grants her "savoir-faire" while protecting

⁷⁰ Ibid, 117.

⁷¹ Ibid, 127.

⁷² Nora Johnson "Sex and the College Girl," 4.

⁷³ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 144.

her “maiden dignity.”⁷⁴ Johnson hints at a deeper analysis of the female psyche by writing that a woman’s liberal education urged her to question herself and her place in the world.⁷⁵

When a female college graduate married, becoming a housewife represented a marker of prestige and indicated that her husband was wealthy enough to provide for his family without any additional income.⁷⁶ Women who did work outside the home were expected to be teachers, nurses, and typists. A woman’s income was considered to be “pin money” to supplement their husband’s earning, but many households depended on the wife’s additional income.⁷⁷ Out of 60 million adult American women in 1956, over 22 million worked.⁷⁸ In 1954, over 5 million of those women worked as secretaries and typists and an additional 4 million worked in factories. The U.S. School System employed 835,000 women as teachers.⁷⁹ During the 1950s a female teacher earned an average yearly salary of \$4,689 while a recent male liberal arts graduate earned an average yearly salary of \$5,400.⁸⁰

Employers hesitated to hire women college graduates for jobs with opportunities for advancement, and often offered women short-term jobs with glamorous descriptions that would end in a few years once she married. One employer admitted: “I know we’re getting the wrong kind of girl. She’s not getting married.”⁸¹ A woman could gain some agency by becoming a flight attendant for instance, but any career aspirations evaporated once she married and was required to quit. Male pilots feared some women aspired to be

⁷⁴ Nora Johnson “Sex and the College Girl,” 6.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 5.

⁷⁶ Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed*, 17.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 7.

⁷⁸ “Basic Statistics,” *Life*, December 24, 1956, 26.

⁷⁹ “Women Hold Third of Jobs,” *Life*, December 24, 1956, 32-35.

⁸⁰ Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed*, 16.

⁸¹ Ibid. 17.

pilots themselves, and successfully pressured the Commerce Department to ban women from flying planes carrying passengers in bad weather.⁸² This measure essentially banned women from flying all planes. Women found themselves ushered into the household, and in the 1950s and early 1960s a typical white women married at twenty and had three children before completing her family by age thirty.⁸³

In 1956, *Life* devoted an entire issue to the American women that promised to illuminate “her achievements and troubles.” The attractive full time working mother Jennie Magill, who “relishes every minute she can spend with her two children,” posed on the cover with her five-year-old daughter Laurie.⁸⁴ The magazine culled both female and male writers to expound on the complicated American woman, but the articles contradicted one another as some attempted to claim feminism has run its course while another celebrated a female architect. In her introduction to the issue, Catherine Marshall, who had written a best-selling biography on her preacher husband, wrote that “the American woman today finds herself being analyzed and admired, envied and criticized as never before.” Marshall continued that a thoughtful woman “will never mention the day she got her first job or the day she outwitted her boss on his ground” as her most satisfying moment, but will rather remember dancing at her first formal and holding her first baby.”⁸⁵ Her article set the tone for the issue, showing that American women remained feminine and maintained their role as mothers throughout the articles, with a few notable exceptions.

In the special issue, several prominent public female figures debated the role of

⁸² Ibid. 19.

⁸³ Ibid, 55.

⁸⁴ Catherine Marshall “Introduction.” *Life*, December 24, 1956, 2.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 2.

women in American society. The eminent female author Mary Ellen Chase responded to the prompt “What U.S. Woman Has Accomplished” by chastising American women for “*not* living up to their responsibilities” and failing to contribute “their necessary part to the common welfare.” She probed further, asking: “Why is it that, with their vast new freedom of opportunity, with time, talents, and encouragements, our women, with rare and notable exceptions, are not becoming great scientists, doctors, musicians, artists, and writers?”⁸⁶ A professor of literature at Smith College for 24 years, Chase observed female graduates herself. By 1960, women accounted for only 6% of American doctors, 3% of lawyers, and less than 1% of engineers.⁸⁷ In contrast to these statistics, Cornelia Otis Skinner wrote an article entitled “Women Are Misguided” as they continue to “[wage] a shrill, ridiculous war over the dead issue of feminism.” She criticized a female doctor for her ugly features, and admitted to feeling “uncomfortable” at seeing an all women’s orchestra, because, despite acknowledging their talent, “the sight of a woman playing a peculiarly unwomanly instrument is so distracting that one spends the time watching her instead of listening to the music she produces.”⁸⁸ Noted anthropologist Margaret Mead took a more nuanced approach in her article, “She Had Strength Based on a Pioneer Past.” She wrote that “American woman are not thought of as a weak or subservient sex” but are regarded “as being not quite as strong as the kind of men who make suitable husbands.” Essentially, women were caught in “a striking paradox of women who are educated like men and who can do most of the things men do but who are still taught to prefer marriage over any way of life.”⁸⁹ These conflicting directives

⁸⁶ Mary Ellen Chase “She Misses Some Goals.” *Life*, December 24, 1956, 24.

⁸⁷ Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed*, 12.

⁸⁸ Cornelia Otis Skinner “Women Are Misguided.” *Life*, December 24, 1956, 73-5.

⁸⁹ Margaret Mead “She Has Strength Based on a Pioneer Past.” *Life*, December 24, 1956, 27.

towards women continued throughout the 1950s. Women journalists persisted in resisting male expectations by remaining in the workforce and earning steady salaries to support themselves.

In the 1950s, many middle- and upper-class white women left their college years to enter a workforce strictly defined by gender constructs. While women held a third of all jobs, their role as workers continued to be marginalized by magazines and advertisements.⁹⁰ The declarative 1956 issue of *Life* magazine devoted several pages to working women, but not a single female doctor or lawyers appeared in the hefty spread. Rather, women and men flipping through the pages saw photographs of women working as nurses, teachers, assemblers, secretaries, factory workers, and dancing chorus girls. The unprecedented number of female writers featured in the issue stand out, but their role as writers and career women in their own right was overlooked. While magazines like *Time* and *Life* oversaw predominantly male editors and staffers, women's magazines offered opportunities for female writers to publish their work. Women's magazines enabled women to pursue financially secure careers and provided a space for them to express their own ideas about gender and women in the workplace. As cultural norms continued to insist an ideal housewife should remain in the home, female writers began creating their own openings in the workforce that simultaneously challenged gender constructs and reinforced domesticity to build a career.

⁹⁰ "Women Hold Third of Jobs." *Life*, 31.

CHAPTER TWO

The Culture of 'Ladies Home Journal'

In October of 1948, *Time* magazine portrayed Bruce and Beatrice Blackmar Gould, two accomplished editors in magazine publishing, as a glamorized, prosperous couple sitting around the living room as “relaxed [and] ruminative” Bruce puffs a cigar and “lets his handsome, smartly dressed wife do much of the talking.” The writer adds that “the Goulds entertain simply, serve ‘a’ cocktail, and, like a good *Journal* family, live well within their combined salaries of \$75,000 a year.”¹ The two editors in question helmed *Ladies Home Journal*, the most successful women’s magazine at the time. Under their leadership, the October 1948 issue of *Ladies Home Journal* boasted \$2,6777,260 worth of advertisements in its 278 pages, which surpassed the ad revenue of any magazine, including *Time*.² Not merely a fluke, the next month the *Journal* continued to break records. Despite their accomplishment, the *Time* article reduced the co-editor in chiefs to a classic American couple by describing the Goulds sitting around the living room playing their respective roles as husband and wife.

The *Time* article highlights the Goulds’ business prowess and credits them with reinvigorating the formerly stuffy magazine since their arrival in 1935, while simultaneously subordinating Beatrice Gould’s role as a female professional. The article declares that the Goulds “threw out the stuffy editorials, the colorless layouts, the long ‘short’ stories, and crusaded for public health, clean politics and flogging for child beaters.”³ Still, in the midst of this praise, the author slips in criticism about the *Journal*’s fiction section. By “male standards (which do not matter to the *Journal*), its

¹ “Ladies’ Choice,” *Time*, October 4, 1948, 51.

² *Ibid.*, 46.

³ *Ibid.* 48.

‘problem’ fiction is below the standard of its articles.”⁴ Bruce said that he and his wife disagreed with the common notion that “women’s interests were confined to the home” and consequently “set out to blast the *Journal* out of its rut.”⁵ However, the *Time* writer persisted in relegating Beatrice to her own home. The article recognized Beatrice Gould’s success as a female editor, while emphasizing her feminine, domestic side as the “idea woman” who stands beside her husband, the “general manager.”⁶ Both Bruce and Beatrice played integral roles in nurturing the *Journal*’s monthly circulation from 2,590,000 in 1935 to an impressive 4,520,982 in 1948, but only Beatrice finds her accomplishments diminished.⁷ The couple’s portrayal reflected a larger social viewpoint that pinned a woman to the home in a silk dress and a made up face, regardless of her accomplishments in the workplace. Aside from their gendered portrayal, the article reveals *Ladies Home Journal*’s power in the predominantly masculine world of journalism that warranted coverage from the widely respected *Time* magazine.

Bruce and Beatrice Gould nurtured *Ladies Home Journal* into the most successful women’s magazine of the 1940s and 1950s with a circulation that almost surpassed five million monthly readers by 1960. They championed women’s rights both explicitly through positive portrayals of women and subtly through their predominantly female staff. The white, middle class, and often college educated readers who comprised the bulk of the *Journal*’s audience faced daunting gender constraints in the home and workplace.⁸ When these women leafed through the pages of *Ladies Home Journal*, they saw a

⁴ Ibid, 48.

⁵ Ibid. 48.

⁶ Ibid, 51.

⁷ Ibid, 46-8.

⁸ Nancy A. Walker, “Introduction: Women’s Magazines and Women’s Roles,” in *Women’s Magazines 1940-1960*, ed. Nancy A. Walker (Boston: Bedford/St Martins), 7.

masthead full of accomplished, smart, and talented women to serve as mentors.

Contemporary magazines *Good Housekeeping* and *McCall's* were both edited by Herbert Mayes during the 1950s without a female editor-in-chief by his side.⁹ Many, and perhaps most famously Betty Friedan, have criticized *Ladies Home Journal* for silencing women and placing them in confined lifestyles, but I argue that the treatment of women's roles were more complex within each issue.¹⁰ Yes, the magazine did feature advertisements with pot roast recipes and featured far more housewives than working women, but the magazine also encouraged all women to value themselves and their potential role in society.

Ladies Home Journal emerged from the flood of women's magazines to become the most widely circulated women's magazine in the middle of the twentieth-century. Founded in 1883 by Cyrus H.K. Curtis and his wife Louisa Knapp Curtis, *Ladies Home Journal* originated from the "Women and Home" section of the weekly Philadelphia newspaper *Tribune and Farmer*. Mr. Curtis launched his magazine with the declaration: "We propose to make it a household necessity – so good, so pure, so true, so brave, so full, so complete, that a young couple will no more think of going to housekeeping without it than a cookstove."¹¹ Within four years, the magazine reached 300,000 national subscribers.¹² Louisa Curtis assumed an authoritative role in daily operations and promoted her Progressive beliefs, arguing "that women should be sufficiently educated to

⁹ Wolfgang Saxon, "Herbert Mayes, 87, a Former Top Editor of Magazines, Dies," *The New York Times*, November 1, 1987, accessed February 10, 2014, nytimes.com.

In an interview with the *New York Times* in 1962, Mayes credited his wife with unofficially helping him oversee content, but acknowledged: "Of course, she never sets foot in the office and she doesn't get paid." Peter Bart, "Advertising: A Maverick in Magazine Field," *The New York Times*, March 25, 1962, accessed February 10, 2014, www.nytimes.com.

¹⁰ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, (1963 repr., New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 80. Please see introduction.

¹¹ Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 3.

¹² Nancy A. Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 35.

support themselves financially” and featuring advocates of female suffrage.¹³ Louisa covered topics ranging from education to temperance to women’s organizations alongside a smattering of domestic advice and fiction. The Curtises were one of the first magazine owners to conduct market research, which revealed their readers lived in the suburbs of large towns and attended church. The Curtises targeted white middle class women, but they “assumed that these readers aspired to improve their class standing, largely by improving their material surroundings.”¹⁴

The twenty-five year old writer Edward Bok took over the *Journal* in 1890, and operated under the assumption that “women were essentially domestic creatures who could best serve the nation by influencing their husbands and sons” through their role as consumers.¹⁵ In 1913, Bok explained that he edited the *Journal* for someone who appeared “by her dress, her manner, and in every way, to be typical of the best in American womanhood.”¹⁶ Two years later, Bok elaborated during a meeting with the Curtis Publishing Company that he edited the *Journal* for a woman with family incomes between \$1,200 and \$3,000. Accounting for inflation, those numbers amount to between \$24,000 and \$60,000 today. He believed that “they are the families having the greatest need of help, and to whom we can be of greatest assistance.”¹⁷ During Bok’s thirty-year reign, the *Journal* presided among the “Big Six” women’s magazines, classified as such for their large circulation and large profits from advertisers.¹⁸ Douglas B. Ward’s statistical study of *Ladies Home Journal* readership indicates that Bok ensured the

¹³ Ibid, 36.

¹⁴ Ibid, 37.

¹⁵ Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 4.

¹⁶ Douglas B. Ward, “The Geography of *Ladies Home Journal*,” *Journalism History* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2008), 2, accessed February 12, 2014, *America: History and Life*.

¹⁷ Ibid, 2.

¹⁸ Ibid, 3.

Journal “kept its distance from African-American and had its lowest per reader capita readership in areas with the highest African-American population.”¹⁹

Bruce and Beatrice Gould joined *Ladies Home Journal* in 1935 as co-editors-in-chief and swiftly reinvigorated the old fashioned *Journal* with their fresh perspective on the modern woman. They had met at the State University of Iowa in 1919 before moving to New York City to pursue careers as writers in 1922 after they both graduated. The couple married in 1923.²⁰ Beatrice matriculated into the Columbia School of Journalism as Bruce pursued playwriting. Both worked in magazines and Bruce worked on the editorial staff at *The Saturday Evening Post* before they joined the *Journal*.²¹ They faced a daunting job as the *Journal* ranked fourth in popularity behind *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman’s Home Companion*, and *McCall’s* in a Gollup’s poll in 1935.²² Many colloquially disparaged the *Journal* as the stodgy “*Old Ladies’ Journal*.”²³

Bruce and Beatrice Gould imbued every issue with the underlying belief that “men and women are different.”²⁴ While the phrase may strike some as antifeminist, in actuality the Goulds perpetuated a strong belief that women should be proud of their gender. Instead of attempting to emulate men and strip away their selves as women, they should relish in their own gender. The Goulds believed women were fully human in their own right, and “simply not little men, or equal men, or heaven forbid bigger men – in mind or spirit – though they may luminously possess both.”²⁵ The Goulds insisted on

¹⁹ Ibid, 9.

²⁰ “Goulds Quit the Home Journal; Curtis Anderson, 34, is Editor,” *The New York Times*, March 6, 1962, accessed February 4, 2014, nytimes.com.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Nancy A. Walker, *Shaping our Mothers’ World*, 60-1.

²³ Ibid, 60-1.

²⁴ Bruce Gould, *American Story* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 10.

²⁵ Ibid, 10.

reading the entire copy before each issue went to print.²⁶ They maintained their philosophy that “a woman’s world is a great deal broader than just the kitchen.”²⁷ By soliciting the best writers and paying top-level contributors well, the *Journal* maintained high standards. A praise-worthy article in *Newsweek* in April of 1950 astutely noted that the Goulds “never edit down to their readers.”²⁸ They revived their predecessor Edward Blok’s educational campaign against social diseases, and refused to shy away from touchier topics, including slum clearance, birth control, and mental illness.²⁹ The same *Newsweek* article noted that by remaining astutely connected to their readers’ interests and desires, the Goulds “have made the *Journal* a big moneymaker, and circulation-wise, head and shoulder pads above any other American woman’s magazine.”³⁰ By 1950, the *Journal*’s monthly circulation had climbed to 4,700,000 subscribers. That same year, the general interest *Life* magazine had a weekly circulation of 5,000,000 subscribers.³¹

Bruce and Beatrice felt that their predecessor, Edward Bok, “had envisioned his audience as statistics rather than persons – all alike, less intelligent” than the Goulds believed their audience embodied.³² In his memoir, Bruce wrote that he, unlike Bok, “had the advantage, irritating often, of a woman’s true point of view - a woman who dared talk back, who didn’t think women were dolts, shrews, or angels sheltered from the facts of life.”³³ Moreover, the Goulds believed women had the power to affect change. The Goulds used their widespread audience as a public platform to crusade for safer hospitals

²⁶ “Never Underestimate...” *Newsweek*, April 17, 1950, 64.

²⁷ Ibid, 64.

²⁸ Ibid, 64.-6.

²⁹ Ibid, 66.

Edward Blok was the first to print *syphilis* in an American magazine.

³⁰ Ibid, 64.

³¹ Ibid, 64.

³² Bruce Gould, *American Story*, 166.

³³ Ibid, 167.

during the late 1930s with the campaign “Why Should Mothers Die?” In 1935, every thousand live births resulted in six maternal deaths in the United States. The Goulds weathered vocal and vehement protests from physicians around the country, but they responded by insisting: “The United States ought to have as low a maternal death as England or Sweden. Even at some cost we must have it.”³⁴ Beatrice flew to England to observe the East End Maternity Hospital, which boasted a lower maternal mortality rate despite being staffed by midwives and lacking several modern amenities present in American hospitals. The issue came down to properly training nurses and doctors, and propelled the Goulds to continue their campaign into the 1940s. By 1941, the maternal death rate during childbirth had dropped in the United States.³⁵

Alongside her public health agenda, Beatrice overhauled the staid fashion spreads and integrated an aspirational feel to the magazine by featuring houses and clothes priced above what most readers could realistically afford.³⁶ Beatrice insisted on “one beautiful spread of dream clothes in each issue.”³⁷ A fashion spread from the December 1957 issue bore the headline “Silks and Satins and Bows” and featured elegant collections from the Parisian fashion designers Christian Dior and Givenchy.³⁸ A tall, slim, red haired model leaned against an intricately metal graded patio in a “bronze-green taffeta skirt” with “mauve velvet bow-tie belt” and a black lace blouse while in another photo she donned a satin pink skirt and sported bright red lipstick.³⁹ The spread neglects to list prices, knowing that most readers could not afford haute couture and would resort to purchasing

³⁴ Ibid, 172.

³⁵ Ibid, 173.

³⁶ Nancy A. Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World*, 37.

³⁷ Bruce Gould, *American Story*, 166.

³⁸ Wilhela Cushman, “Silks and Satins and Bows,” *Ladies Home Journal*, December 1956, 73.

³⁹ Ibid, 74.

similar styles in their own local department stores. The photographs attempted to inspire readers to adapt a hint of elegance in their lives. The two-page spread lends a touch of aspirational glamor to the magazine. According to Nancy Walker, by presenting the materialistic items which their readers should aspire to, the Goulds' helped "define domestic concerns in terms of consumer culture."⁴⁰

Six years into their post at *Ladies Home Journal*, the Goulds poured through numerous submissions for a representational slogan that would both entice advertisers and reflect the tone and voice of the magazine. The editors strived to convey a slogan that would act as a "pat on the back" to female readers. Bruce recognized that while "[t]he editor's purpose is to inform as well as to entertain; the advertiser's purpose is to sell."⁴¹ While most of the general ads floating throughout the *Journal* promoted domesticity, and featured women dressed in evening gowns around gleaming refrigerators and slogans for Palmolive face wash that proclaimed "You're Prettier than you think you are!" the *Journal* refused to completely pander to its advertisers.⁴² Early on, the Goulds turned down half a million dollars in ad revenue from Lysol for the company's proposed ads that encouraged women to douche themselves with a strong daily dose of disinfectant. After consulting with numerous gynecologists who warned the practice was dangerous and unfounded in medicine, the Goulds refused to run the ad.⁴³ In his memoir, Bruce reiterated that "we knew early on that we didn't want our magazine to be that deadening thing, a catalogue for advertisers" for "ham recipes published opposite a page advertising

⁴⁰ Nancy A. Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World*, 64.

⁴¹ Bruce Gould, *American Story*, 200.

⁴² Palmolive, Advertisement, December 1957, *Ladies Home Journal*.

Frigidaire Appliances, Advertisement, December 1957, *Ladies Home Journal*.

⁴³ Nancy A. Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World*, 61.

ham arouse skepticism.”⁴⁴ The slogan would enable the *Journal* to satisfy both readers and advertisers.

Leo Lionno, the art director at *Fortune*, conceived of the enduring slogan “Never underestimate the power of a woman.”⁴⁵ In a reflective interview with the *New York Times* in 1957, Bruce said: “God knows the women deserve it. They do half the work on this earth...Personally, I’ve always had a high regard for women. My mother, my wife, my red-haired daughter, all make me appreciate them.”⁴⁶ The advertising department designed twelve ads per year, and envisioned a thirty-five year old wife and mother with a husband earning between \$10,000 and \$15,000 as the prototypical reader. The copywriters assumed a female reader held a college degree, handled the cooking in the household, and “love[d] a pretty home, but [was] not a neurotic pillow-puffer-upper.”⁴⁷ The ads reinforce ideals that “the holder of the torch of liberty is a woman, that only female sturgeons can produce caviar; that a tax cut in Coventry was a consequence of Lady Godiva’s ride.”⁴⁸ A cartoon from May 12, 1951 highlighted the remarkable presence of a woman in the Defense Industry, and referenced the real life figure, Ann M. Rosenberg, who served as Assistant Secretary of Defense between 1950 and 1953, as seen in image four.⁴⁹ While the cartoon appears to feminize Rosenberg’s position with the fresh cut flowers in a vase and proper hat, the ad also suggests that she belongs in the masculine field, regardless of her gender.

⁴⁴ Bruce Gould, *American Story*, 170.

⁴⁵ Phyllis Lee Levin, “‘Pat On Back’ Given to Women Sixteen Years Ago Still Powerful,” *The New York Times*, September 2, 1957, accessed February 16, 2014, nytimes.com.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ “‘Never Underestimate the Power of a Woman’: Vintage Ladies Home Journal Cartoons,” *Ladies Home Journal*, accessed February 15, 2014, <http://www.lhj.com/style/covers/never-underestimate-the-power-of-a-woman-vintage-ladies-home-journal-cartoons/?page=2>.

Never Underestimate the Power of a Woman!



Figure Four: “Never Underestimate the Power of a Woman!” *Ladies Home Journal* accessed February 14, 2014, www.lhj.com.

The female *New York Times* writer Phyllis Lee Levin wrote admiringly: “The Goulds, and their slogan, were one of the first to proclaim ‘women as people.’ For all practical purposes, they might have discovered the second sex.”⁵⁰

The editorial staff of *Ladies Home Journal* assumed their readers inhabited a middle-class lifestyle as stay at home mothers with some college education, but they themselves held respectable careers as staff writers and editors. The masthead reveals a heavily populated female staff that influenced the style and tone with their unique voice. In 1957, below Bruce and Beatrice Gould was Mary Bass, the Executive Editor, and Laura Lou Brookman, the Special Projects Editors. The three highest positions on the masthead belonged to women. Out of the 63 editors on the masthead, 52 were women.⁵¹ These figures reveal a radical departure from general interest magazines, such as *Time*,

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ “Editors,” *Ladies Home Journal*, December 1957, 4.

Life, and *Newsweek*, which heavily favored male staff members. Unlike the college-educated women who abandoned their studies and potential career prospects for a two-story home in a pleasant suburb, these staff members resisted the recommended path for women of their time. Despite their status as working women, the editors worked for a magazine primary geared towards white, middle-class mothers, many of whom did not work outside the home. Accordingly, many women featured in the magazine had husbands and children and remained in the home. However, a closer examination of the monthly content reveals profiles and celebrations of working women who had defied normative gender ideals featured alongside housewives. The females overseeing the monthly content imbued the magazine with their own personal beliefs about females in the workplace.

A feature on dieting in December of 1956 exemplifies how editors often comically complicated gender. The particular article, “The Fabulous Formula,” by beauty editor Dawn Crowell Newman, initially resembles a staid story on “[t]he reducing diet for people who could never reduce before,” but the next paragraph reveals a male candidate for the diet.⁵² Pete Martin, the author and associate editor of the *Saturday Evening Post* “has reduced from a paunchy 227 pounds to a trim 192 on the Fabulous Formula.”⁵³ The article featured before and after photos of Martin, and quoted him saying: “My face was a bright red that betrayed my high blood pressure, numerous chins, bulged over tight collars, even my secretary troubled me” before losing thirty pounds.⁵⁴ The sentiment echoed insecurities that readers often heard other women express about their weight. Beauty editor Newman orchestrated a role reversal by deliberately choosing a male to test

⁵² Dawn Crowell Newman, “The Fabulous Formula,” *Ladies Home Journal*, December 1956, 64.

⁵³ Ibid, 64.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 64.

out the diet. An additional candidate, Kate Wuebker, also appears in the article, but Martin's presence remains remarkable.

The *Journal* hired the internationally renowned political journalist Dorothy Thompson to educate readers on social and political issues of the day. Her monthly column offered the insight of a widely respected female journalist that believed and championed the female sex. In the November 1951 issue of *Ladies Home Journal*, Thompson's column bore the daring headline: "Are Women Different?" Thompson reached out to fifty prominent women to propose her thesis that women possessed "an untapped source of spiritual power."⁵⁵ A respected (and unnamed) woman responded that no, she rejected Thompson's idea, for: "I cannot agree with you that there is, in our sex, 'an untapped source of spiritual power,' superior to men's. That woman can procreate seems to me a biological accident and no guarantee of wisdom, vision or moral strength."⁵⁶ This unnamed woman's words infuriated Thompson, who consequently set out to challenge her opponent's views. Thompson further clarified her views, elaborating that she meant "an untapped source of spiritual power in women...untapped and unrealized by *women themselves*."⁵⁷ She did not claim that women are inherently superior or inferior to men, but rather that "the source of feminine power is different, arising out of a different experience: and this difference is essential as a balancing force in human society."⁵⁸ She argued women in positions of power were afraid to confront men, for "instead of supplementing and modifying the masculine experience and urge, they become rivals and emulators, pleased as peacocks if anyone tells them 'they have

⁵⁵ Dorothy Thompson, "Are Women Different?" *Ladies Home Journal*, November 1951, 13.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 13.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 14.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 14.

the brain of a man’” in this masculine world.⁵⁹ Thompson urged women to embrace their instincts as inherently female and unique from men.

In 1948, the *Journal* hired Margaret Hickey, a lawyer and prominent activist, to launch the monthly “Public Affairs Department” and encourage women to participate in mainstream politics and reform movement. Hickey was the former president of the Professional Women’s Club.⁶⁰ During her first year at the *Journal*, Hickey wrote a piece about the movement in San Diego to give high school boys and girls sex education. Hickey argued that “[t]he schools, the parents, the churches and the communities should accept complementary responsibility in the field of sex education and human relations for young people.”⁶¹ Hickey interviewed a female doctor who had seen a scared, confused thirteen-year old girl in her San Diego office who “wasn’t clear how it happened, or if anything really had happened, but she had been shocked and bewildered” after a first date.⁶² Instead of recognizing their fault in failing to educate their daughter about sex and contraceptives, the girl’s parents shamed her for being “that kind of girl.”⁶³ Hickey chastised parents for ignoring the crucial need to educate both girls and boys on sexual matters.

Ladies Home Journal strived to educate its readers on public health and became a forerunner in women’s magazines on sex education. Birth control first surfaced in mainstream magazines in 1915, and made its way to women’s magazines by the 1930s

⁵⁹ Ibid, 137.

⁶⁰ Joanne Meyerowitz, “Beyond the Feminine Mystique,” in *Not June Cleaver*, ed. Joane Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 240.

⁶¹ Margaret Hickey, “Help Wanted,” *Ladies Home Journal*, May 1948, 23.

⁶² Ibid, 23.

⁶³ Ibid, 23.

once it became legalized.⁶⁴ *Ladies Home Journal* beat its female competitors in March of 1938 to become the first women's magazine to cover birth control with the article "What Do the Women of America Think About BIRTH CONTROL?"⁶⁵ The article culled responses from the 37,000 women polled nationally, and found that "98% of the mothers said they are glad they have children," and that 79% of women "believe in birth control."⁶⁶ The article reassured women that motherhood and birth control went hand in hand.

In September of 1953, the *Journal* capitalized on Dr. Alfred Kinsey's sex research by publishing an article entitled "What Women Want to Know About the Kinsey Book" that openly addressed sexual practices among American men and women. The article tackled a series of questions, including: "Is it true that men are more sexually responsive than women," to which the article responds: "Yes. In terms of averages, men respond sexually more often than do women."⁶⁷ The article talks frankly about sexual stimulation and sexual practices, and informs readers that "looking at nude pictures usually arouses some degree of sexual response in males" but "less often in females."⁶⁸ Kinsey recommends that mothers impart their own sexual knowledge to their daughters to prevent frigidity in marriage. The article brings up orgasms in a straightforward manner with the question tackling why "women are generally slower than men to reach a climax during the sex act."⁶⁹ Kinsey's research concludes that yes, a difference persists because

⁶⁴ Dolores Flamiano, "Covering Contraception: Discourses of Gender, Motherhood, and Sexuality in Women's Magazines, 1938-1969), 59-60, *American Journalism* 17, no. 3 (July 2000), accessed March 1, 2014, *America: History and Life*.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 68.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 68.

⁶⁷ Barbara Benson, "What women want to know," *Ladies Home Journal*, September 1953, 52.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 53.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 200.

men are more responsive to psychological stimulus while women respond more to tactile stimulation. Despite this, Kinsey believes “the average female is capable of reaching such a response as rapidly as the average male, assuming appropriate and continuous stimulation.”⁷⁰ Remarkably, writer Benson clinically relayed the facts and findings without an underlying moral judgment. Moreover, the article acknowledges that its readers are sexual women with their own individual needs by tackling orgasms and sexual practices.

The popular monthly column “How America Lives” first surfaced on the pages of the *Journal* in 1940 as the editors selected twelve families per year to “reveal a tapestry of American life.”⁷¹ Bruce wrote that the *Journal* wanted to explore the nuances of “four people to be fed on \$10 a week, life-insurance payments to be increased from a budget already strained, an ill-adjusted teenager, a harried housewife snatching a few precious hours for reading or community work,” and so forth.⁷² The first family featured included an introductory text promising to feature “all sections of these sea-to-sea United States...all income groups, from the \$1,000-a -year farmer to the \$25,000-a-year city big shot.”⁷³ In 1949, the Goulds revealed the selection process for families in an article entitled “How the Journal Lives.” Editors scoured the country for potential families and interviewed between three and six families for each issue. The featured families “have been transformed by the skills of various experts in home decoration and personal

⁷⁰ Ibid, 200.

⁷¹ Bruce Gould, *American Story*, 203.

⁷² Ibid, 203.

⁷³ Nancy A. Walker, “The Ladies’ Home Journal, ‘How America Lives’ and the Limits of Cultural Diversity,” *Media History* 6 no. 2 (December 2000), 129, accessed October 2, 2013, *America: History and Life*.

appearance.”⁷⁴ While the *Journal* largely eschewed racial diversity, several “How America Lives” columns featured African American families. When “How America Lives” profiled a prominent black Philadelphia family in 1942 where the father became the first black doctor to ever head a U.S. Army hospital, circulation dropped by 200,000 subscribers in the South and the magazine received thousands of angry letters.⁷⁵ Although the monthly column travelled from the “urban ghetto to the affluent suburbs, from immigrant labourers to wealthy entrepreneurs, the ideal remained the white middle-class family.”⁷⁶ While the articles initially appear to champion the ideal family to be a typical household with a stay at home mother, several columns subtly challenged this narrative.

In the October 1958 issue of *Ladies Home Journal*, staff writer Jean Todd Freeman profiled the financially well-off working mother Sally Shannon in “How America Lives.” The article presents a partial role reversal of the archetypal stay at home mother. Freeman described Sally as a “sparkling, vital young woman with wide, expansive eyes.” She and her husband Donald (Don) employ a nanny and housekeeper to look after their three-year old John and the baby Susanna. Sally bluntly admits: “I work because I like to – not because I have to” and further challenges the reader by asking: “Does that mean I’m not a good mother? Some of my friends think so,” but Sally and her husband both support her choice.⁷⁷ Sally’s salary combined with her husband, a Washington correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*, amounts to \$15,000 a year.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 136.

⁷⁵ Nancy A. Walker, “An Introduction to Women’s Magazines and Women’s Roles,” in *Women’s Magazines 1940-1960*, 6.

⁷⁶ Nancy A. Walker, “The Ladies Home Journal, ‘How America Lives’ and the Limits of Cultural Diversity,” 137.

⁷⁷ Jean Todd Freeman, “My Working Doesn’t Hurt Anyone,” *Ladies Home Journal*, October 1958, 162.

Freeman notes that the couple's salary entitles them to "enjoy the orderly elegance of this eighteenth-century community only ten minutes from the heart of the nation's capital," but Sally's position as the secretary to the special assistant to the director at the United States Information Agency brings in substantially less than Don's salary.⁷⁸ While Sally starts her days sharply at 8:45 am, Don takes on a more domesticized role and "about this time, is propped against the refrigerator waiting for the eggs to boil. Tall, casual and cheerful, Don...is listening to the radio news, drinking coffee, glancing through the morning paper, keeping an eye on Susanna, and carrying on a rather abstracted conversation with his son."⁷⁹ The article supports the couples' decision to both work, such as when Sally admits she relishes the evenings she spends alone while Don works, for: "If I were cooped up all day, with just the children to talk to, I'd probably be waiting for Donald, dying to go out to dinner, a party, a theater." She feels appreciated at her office, which negates her need "to hear Donald tell me what a clever, efficient person [she] is."⁸⁰ Towards the article's conclusion, Sally admits her mother-in-law would prefer "if [Don] was a lawyer, and if we lived in the suburbs, in a split-level ranch-style house, with two cars and a television set and...neighbors exactly like us," but her husband interjects: "But *we* wouldn't like that." Sally laughs: "No, we certainly wouldn't."⁸¹ The mother-in-law's wishes stand in for the more typical families often featured, but the Freemans serve as a conscious alternative to the norm.

Most "How America Lives" columns appeared to adhere more strictly to traditional family values, but the female writers often lent a sympathetic lens to stay at

⁷⁸ Ibid, 162.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 164.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 164.

⁸¹ Ibid, 170.

home mothers and hinted at feelings of discontent. In the July 1951 “How America Lives” column, Betty Hannah Hoffman writes about the Peterson family from Akron, Ohio. Twenty-nine year old housewife Annie (Algy) Peterson feels stifled at home with three children under five and a husband who blatantly declares: “I’m away so much that bringing up the kids has to be her job.”⁸² Akron’s letter to the *Journal* appears at the top of the article, where she laments: “I seem to have everything that anyone would want (with the exception of freedom from many worries), and yet I’m tense and cranky and a good example of everything a mother shouldn’t be.” Algy continues: “she was never taught how to get along with [small children] or how to sacrifice so much of my time and so many of my desires, willingly, for them.”⁸³ While she remains at home with her unruly children, her thirty-five year old husband Andrew works for Goodyear Aircraft and spends four nights a week on business travel. He brings home between \$5,000 and \$7,000 a year.⁸⁴ Andrew claims that by the time he’s home, “I’m pretty fagged out,” but the article references countless times Algy struggles to discipline her children and clean the house with no help and inadequate sleep.⁸⁵ The writer Hoffman pointedly mentions Algy’s college education, for Algy attended Wooster College before graduating from Syracuse University with honors grades and a degree in the fine arts. She worked as a copy editor for one of Akron’s largest department stores before giving up her career to marry Andrew six years ago.⁸⁶ Algy admits to times where she “wants to sit down and bawl,” such as the instance where three-year old Frankie went to the bathroom by himself and removed all the soiled diapers from the can and stuffed them into the toilet, causing a

⁸² Betty Hannah Hoffman, “Help Wanted!,” *Ladies Home Journal*, July 1951, 107.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 107.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 119.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 119.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 109.

\$20 plumber bill.⁸⁷ Hoffman sympathizes with Algy, who desires the time “to stay home with the house free of children” to pursue her creative desires from college “which are largely unsatisfied.” The pointed word choice of “unsatisfied” alludes to Algy’s unhappiness as a housewife without an outlet for her creative and intellectual desires.

Beyond the human-interest stories and public affairs columns, every issue contained an editorial by either Bruce or Beatrice Gould. Beatrice often wrote impassioned editorials that heralded women. In May of 1960, she implored her readers to use their political right to vote to affect change, for “[i]n the forty years since women won the right to vote, they have come to wield a kind of political power as yet underestimated.”⁸⁸ Beatrice urged her readers to disregard this “lingering belief that political power is somehow in conflict with being a good wife and mother.”⁸⁹ She celebrates the potential impact women can make by standing on equal ground with their husbands. Beatrice hoped women would use their political power that previous generations of women fought relentlessly to secure.

Throughout their reign at *Ladies Home Journal*, the Goulds created a space for women to express their voices, and crusaded for controversial causes such as birth control, sexual pleasure, and female political activism. Bruce and Beatrice refused to pander to their readers, and believed the magazine’s power lay “in its remarkable audience, the women of America, who, if spoken to in a way which touches their concern, have capacities for work, for altruism, which should never be underestimated.”⁹⁰ Female readers encountered sexism and discrimination in the workplace. When *Mademoiselle*

⁸⁷ Ibid, 118.

⁸⁸ Beatrice Gould, “Editorial,” *Ladies Home Journal*, May 1960.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Bruce Gould, *American Story*, 327.

magazine, geared towards college-aged women, had its young Guest Editors (twenty college students) report back on their career interviews with “stars” of various career fields in May of 1958, only five out of the twenty “stars” were women.⁹¹ The “stars” included the male publisher of the *New York Tribune*, a leading male costume designer for theater, a male painter, a male actor, and a male editor of *Harper’s* to name a few. The female stars included novelist and playwright Jean Kerr, a head of the Altman Bridal department, and the painter Doris Lee.⁹² In this discouraging time period for women, female pioneers such as Beatrice Gould, Dorothy Thompson, and Margaret Hickey stood out as mentors along the pages of *Ladies Home Journal*. In a society that disregarded women, *Ladies Home Journal* carved out a space for them and demanded that their voices be heard.

⁹¹ Guest Editors, “We Hitch Our Wagons,” *Mademoiselle*, August 1958, 206.

⁹² *Ibid*, 206-209.

CHAPTER THREE

Working Female Journalists

For female college graduates, positions at national women's magazines offered an escape from the expected career course that confined women to positions as nurses, secretaries, and teachers. *Ladies Home Journal* recruited female writers from all over the nation to contribute and work as staff writers. Many female writers successfully freelanced for several publications while others garnered coveted staff positions that offered benefits and a dependable salary. From its inception, *Ladies Home Journal* valued the insight female writers offered its readers. Intelligent, nuanced, diverse female writers provided an eclectic range of styles that formed the *Journal's* signature voice. Scant research covers the history of the women writers themselves, and so their stories remained undiscovered in dusty archives and basements.

Dorothy Thompson, Maureen Daly, and Betty Hannah Hoffman all cultivated a distinct presence at the *Ladies Home Journal* throughout their careers that spanned decades. Dorothy Thompson (1893 - 1961) developed her national reputation as a foreign correspondent during the 1930s before joining the *Ladies Home Journal* as a monthly columnist. Betty Hannah Hoffman (1918 - 2014) joined the magazine in 1939 as a recent Smith College graduate and remained there until 1962. She penned over fifty "How America Lives" articles and frequently contributed to the "Can This Marriage Be Saved?" series in addition to ghost writing several books and freelancing for magazines. Maureen Daly (1921 - 2006) gained recognition at age eighteen with her *New York Times* bestselling novel *Seventeenth Summer* and went on to head the "sub-deb" column for the

Ladies Home Journal in 1944 and continued to write novels and freelance. Thompson, Hoffman, and Daly represent three distinct examples of women that rose up and became forces in their field. They hailed from different backgrounds, but each brought an individual viewpoint to deconstruct domesticity in the United States. Thompson's national reputation still persists today, but all three women used women's magazines to build a steady career during 1950s.

I. Dorothy Thompson: The Expert on Politics and Women

After graduating from Syracuse University in 1913, Dorothy Thompson began her career stuffing envelopes at the women's suffrage headquarters in Buffalo, New York before heading overseas to carve out a career as an international news correspondent in 1920.¹ The International News Service in London relied on freelancers, and hired Thompson to cover an upcoming conference on Zionism.² Thompson wrote in 1920 that she was "writing for anything and everything that will buy from me" to support herself in Europe.³ By 1921, she finagled a position as a salaried correspondent in Vienna under the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*'s European bureau.⁴ European men accorded her respect as a female journalist, and Thompson believed this stemmed from cultural attitudes that made them accustomed to "talk about art, literature, and affairs of state with women."⁵ Thompson instructed aspiring female journalists: "Don't accept for an instant that it's a man's job, and don't be flattered by the phrase 'You write like a man.'"⁶ During her time

¹ "Cartwheel Girl," *Time*, June 12, 1939, 48.

² Peter Kurth, *American Cassandra* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1990,) 50.

³ *Ibid*, 51.

⁴ *Ibid*, 71.

⁵ *Ibid*, 88.

⁶ *Ibid*, 88.

in Europe, Thompson witnessed several turbulent events leading up to World War II and managed to secure an interview with Adolf Hitler in 1931. At the time, Thompson wrote: “When I finally walked into Adolf Hitler’s salon...I was convinced I was meeting the future dictator of Europe. In something less than fifty seconds I was quite sure I was not.”⁷ Hitler soon expelled Thompson from Germany, but his move only bolstered her reputation.

In 1936, Thompson began writing her syndicated newspaper column “On The Record” that reached over seven million readers.⁸ The column originated in the New York *Herald Tribune*. A radio show followed suit, enabling five and a half million listeners to hear Thompson discuss politics every Monday night at 9 pm.⁹ *Time* magazine honored Thompson in June of 1939 with a cover story, and proclaimed: “[s]he is read, believed, and quoted by millions of women who used to get their political opinions from their husbands.”¹⁰ The article added that Thompson’s followers see in her “an embodiment of an ideal, the typical modern American women they think they would be: emancipated, articulate, and successful, living in the thick of the most exciting periods of history and interpreting it to millions.”¹¹ The article identified Thompson and Eleanor Roosevelt as the two most influential women in the United States. At the time, Thompson was married to the acclaimed American author Sinclair Lewis, but the *Time* article focuses on Thompson and her accomplishments.¹² Moreover, only a single passage discusses Thompson’s role as a mother to her nine-year-old son.

⁷ “Dorothy Thompson Dead at 66; Newspaper Columnist, Author,” *The New York Times*, February 1, 1961.

⁸ “Cartwheel Girl,” *Time*, 47.

⁹ *Ibid*, 47.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 47.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 47.

¹² Thompson married three times. Sinclair Lewis was her second husband.

From 1937 to 1961, Thompson contributed a monthly column to *Ladies Home Journal* that reached millions of female readers. Thompson wrote in 1957 that “these essays have been more personal than anything else I have written” and have often generated personal responses from readers.¹³ In a published collection of her monthly columns, Thompson dedicated the book, *The Courage to Be Happy*, to Bruce and Beatrice Gould, who “have given [her] extraordinary liberty in the choice of subject matter.”¹⁴ In a *New York Times* book review, Virgilia Peterson wrote: “With an ear so attuned to the general heart-beat and a voice – even when pitched too high – that is always unerringly human, her words are bound to find echoes wherever they appear.”¹⁵ Peterson heralded Thompson as a “fighter for truth and justice.”¹⁶ Thompson’s column provided gravitas to the *Journal*, and aimed to inspire and educate readers for over twenty years.

Thompson’s columns covered an expansive range of topics, from religion or foreign policy to child rearing tactics. She imbued every article with a firm belief in the power of women, and used her column to reach a wide platform of women that otherwise might have missed her journalistic voice. Thompson maintained a difference between her daily political column “On The Record” and her monthly column for *Ladies Home Journal*. When conceptualizing story ideas, she had to consider that “Ladies Home Journal, with its vast circulation, may be read for weeks after an issue appears – abroad, in beauty parlors, doctors’ offices, public libraries, and even at home.”¹⁷ Consequently,

¹³ Dorothy Thompson, *The Courage To Be Happy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), viii.

¹⁴ Ibid, x.

¹⁵ Virgilia Peterson, “Defiantly Affirmative,” *The New York Times*, November 17, 1957, accessed April 14, 2014, nytimes.com.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Dorothy Thompson, *The Courage To Be Happy*, viii.

she strived “to write about more enduring things than a current budget or international crisis.”¹⁸ She continued to write for *Ladies Home Journal* up until her death in 1961 at the age of 66.¹⁹

In March of 1949, Thompson wrote a column for *Ladies Home Journal* defending housewives and urging Americans to grant more respect to women in the home. The column, “Occupation – Housewife,” began with the anecdote of a friend of the author who dreaded answering the occupation questions on official documents, for: “it fills me with an inferiority complex as ‘deep as a well and as wide as a barn door.’”²⁰ The question makes her realize: “I am a middle-aged woman, with a university education, and I’ve never made *anything* out of my life.”²¹ Thompson knew that many of her readers possessed college educations they had never used in the workplace after graduation. Thompson refutes her friend by insisting she could write: “Business manager, cook, nurse, chauffeur, dressmaker, interior decorator, accountant, caterer, teacher, private secretary,” and so forth.²² Thompson forced women to acknowledge their talents and contributions to the household in wider terms than sheer income, and wrote that “hundreds of thousands of women...are contributing as much to the well-being of their families by the services they render and the brains they mobilize as are their income-earning husbands.”²³

¹⁸ Ibid, viii.

¹⁹ “Dorothy Thompson Dead at 66; Newspaper Columnist, Author,” *The New York Times*, February 1, 1961, accessed March 20, 2014, nytimes.com

²⁰ Dorothy Thompson, “Occupation – Housewife,” in *The Courage To Be Happy*, ed. Dorothy Thompson, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), 203.

²¹ Ibid, 203.

²² Ibid, 203.

²³ Ibid, 206.

In a *Ladies Home Journal* column from 1956, Thompson used a more political tone to write about how individual Americans could help foreign policy. Entitled “A Foreign Policy for *All* Americans,” she defined foreign policy as “the defense of the best interests of the United States.”²⁴ She wrote: “the task of steering a foreign policy in such a way as to best promote the security and long-range interests of the United States demands knowledge, wisdom, foresight, and analytical powers beyond the capacities of any individual.”²⁵ Her statement negated the idea that solely one person could oversee American foreign policy. The advent of radio and newspapers in the twentieth-century forced political leaders to be held more accountable, but “[none] of us...has continuous access to all the confidential information that pours daily into every foreign office, including ours.”²⁶ Despite these discouraging truths, Thompson urged readers to uphold foreign policy by thinking and acting “in accordance with the American faith.”²⁷ The American faith referred to “national freedom and right to self-government.”²⁸ The column enabled Americans to feel they had the power to affect policy through their individual actions.

Upon her death in 1961, a *New York Times* editorial heralded Thompson as a “phenomenal figure” and “a legend” who left a mark on American journalism.²⁹ Apart from her dynamism, the *Times* believed Thompson stood apart from other journalists because she “spoke out unremittingly for what she felt was right, in large things and

²⁴ Dorothy Thompson, “Foreign Policy for *All* Americans,” in *The Courage To Be Happy*, ed. Dorothy Thompson, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), 156.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 158.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 159.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 163.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 160.

²⁹ “Dorothy Thompson,” *The New York Times*, February 1, 1961, accessed April 14, 2014, nytimes.com

small.”³⁰ The editorial mentioned Thompson’s less flattering reputation as being “too diffuse – writing on woman’s hats and foreign affairs with the same authority,” but countered this accusation by reminding readers that over eight million Americans read her work in newspapers and magazines.³¹

II. Betty Hannah Hoffman: Two Decades at *Ladies Home Journal*

Born a generation after Thompson, Betty Hannah Hoffman graduated from Smith College cum laude in 1939 before commencing a long and prosperous career with *Ladies Home Journal* for four decades. Hoffman later revealed that her class at Smith was not very “career-minded,” and considered herself fortunate to land a position at a magazine.³² Upon her graduation, the national women’s magazines recruited women college graduates, which Hoffman heralded: “a giant advancement for females because up until then we were nurses and secretaries and teachers if we had a paid job at all.”³³ After *Mademoiselle* selected her to be a guest managing editor for their August issue, Hoffman spent the summer in New York City.³⁴ Sylvia Plath later won the same *Mademoiselle* contest and guest edited the August 1953 issue.³⁵ During her summer, Hoffman sent *Ladies Home Journal* an inquiry on *Mademoiselle* stationery and landed a secretarial position at *Ladies Home Journal* in Philadelphia that fall.³⁶ Her interviewer, Bruce Gould, later remarked “he had never met a young woman with so much self-confidence,” and

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Smith Centennial Study Oral History Project, Box # 12, Smith College Archives, 5.

³³ Betty Hannah Hoffman, *Roving Reporter: A Memoir* (Pacific Grove: Self Published, June 2006), 1.

³⁴ Smith Centennial Study Oral History Project, 10.

³⁵ Andrew Wilson, “Sylvia Plath goes mad in Manhattan,” *The Daily Mail*, January 26, 2013, accessed February 2, 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2268714/Sylvia-Plath-goes-mad-Manhattan-How-magazine-assignment-amid-New-Yorks-elite-drove-edge-sanity.html>.

³⁶ Smith Centennial Study Oral History Project, 10.

offered her the position despite her insufficient typing skills.³⁷ Hoffman credited Smith with instilling a strong sense of self-confidence. As a secretary, Hoffman earned \$60 a week.³⁸

Hoffman swiftly took on more responsibility writing captions and reading literary slush submissions until *Ladies Home Journal* promoted her to a staff writer.³⁹ Slush submissions were unsolicited writing samples from unknown writers. While Hoffman settled into life at the magazine, she dated around before meeting the “tall, well-built young man wearing glasses at our apartment door” whom she would later marry.⁴⁰ The man in question, Bob Hoffman, attended the University of Pennsylvania Law School. The two married on June 6, 1942, when Betty was 24 years old. Bob struggled with vision problems, but passed the Pennsylvania bar exam and joined the prestigious Philadelphia law firm Hepburn and Norris.⁴¹ Once World War II erupted, Bob received an honorable discharge from basic training in Virginia due to a bad knee. Betty avidly covered the war on the home front in numerous articles, profiling female workers in factories and female WACS.⁴²

In 1944, Hoffman landed her first “How America Lives” assignment, and went on to write over fifty “How America Lives” articles throughout her career.⁴³ Hoffman later wrote: “After a particular family had been picked, I would spend a week observing and interviewing them and then the Journal editors would arrive and redo their kitchens and

³⁷ Ibid, 2.

³⁸ Betty Hannah Hoffman, *Roving Reporter*, 2.

³⁹ Smith Centennial Study Oral History Project, 10-11.

⁴⁰ Betty Hannah Hoffman, *Roving Reporter*, 2.

⁴¹ Ibid, 3.

⁴² Ibid, 4.

⁴³ Smith Centennial Study Oral History Project, 11,

yard and fences and finances.”⁴⁴ By 1945, Betty and Bob earned a combined annual income of \$7,724.⁴⁵ In 1946, *Ladies Home Journal* profiled Hoffman as a young staff writer. Hoffman’s first son would be born later that year.



Figure Five: “Betty Hannah Hoffman,” *Ladies Home Journal*, January 1946, 6.

She said: “Graduating from Smith College in ’39, I came to the JOURNAL, and like Janie in *Meet Three Career Girls*, got a job as a secretary. Became a staff writer and had a wonderful time buzzing across the country on ‘How America Lives stories,’” but am now “at home awaiting the birth of my first [baby].”⁴⁶ Hoffman withdrew from her post as an associate editor to stay home with her infant son, but she continued to freelance for *Ladies Home Journal* and wrote four to five articles per year. Hoffman described standing at the sink “with your hands in the dishwasher and your phone would ring and say, ‘How would you like to go to Tennessee and write about some cotton or tenant

⁴⁴ Betty Hannah Hoffman, *Roving Reporter*, 8.

⁴⁵ Betty Hannah Hoffman, *Roving Reporter*, 5.

⁴⁶ “Betty Hannah Hoffman,” *Ladies Home Journal*, January 1946, 6.

farmers?’ or ‘How would you like to go to Texas?’⁴⁷ Families initially acted guarded, “[s]o I would try not to ask any questions for awhile and just social chitchat or something” but after two to three days they would relax and “[a]fter a while, you know, they’d tell you more than you could possibly print.”⁴⁸

In 1946, Hoffman profiled three young career women that left behind their hometown St Joseph, Missouri to find success and adventure in New York City, where they “find that New York is just a grown up toy with a heart of gold.”⁴⁹ The three recent college graduates, Janie McPherson, Catherine (Caffie) Barrow, and Gretchen Chase all caught “the career bug together – the high fever, rapid pulse New York variety,” that Hoffman undoubtedly experienced herself as a young Smith graduate.⁵⁰ Hoffman describes the cramped apartment the three women share on West 88th Street “with an enormous slimy looking green marble sink,” “the cockroach problem, the smells of musty halls and clarion-voiced neighbors and their radios” that cost \$83 a month.⁵¹ Barrow secured a job at Guaranty Trust during her senior year at Duke University as a tax analyst trainee for \$161 a month, but admitted the job’s main attraction lay in its New York location. A recent graduate from the University of Missouri Journalism School, McPherson recounted how her dad: “hit the roof when I decided to go to New York; said an inexperienced kid like me didn’t have a prayer in national advertising.”⁵² She proved her father wrong by knocking on the doors of countless major advertising agencies with her portfolio before landing a coveted position as a copywriter for William Esty and

⁴⁷ Betty Hannah Hoffman, *COLLEGE: A Smith Mosaic* ed. Jacqueline Van Voris (West Springfield: Smith College, 1975), 105.

⁴⁸ Smith Centennial Study Oral History Project, 24.

⁴⁹ Betty Hannah Hoffman, “Meet the Three Career Girls,” *Ladies Home Journal*, January 1946, 109.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 109.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 110.

⁵² *Ibid*, 112.

Company making \$260 a month. McPherson considered herself fortunate to work in a field open to women, for “[i]n advertising, women’s talents are expected; they earn just as much as men and can go just as high.”⁵³ The third roommate, Chase, worked as an assistant to the personnel director of American Express for \$177 a week after graduating from Swarthmore College. Chase aspired to eventually work in Foreign Service. She admitted that “American Express has never sent a woman abroad *yet*,” but acknowledged she was also the first woman to hold her current position.⁵⁴ Throughout the article, McPherson expresses her desire to work, and exclaims: “Can you imagine kissing some guy goodbye every morning and walking over to a sinkful of dirty dishes? Not for me! Maybe later. Not now.”⁵⁵ The other two women only planned to work a few years before settling down, but the article makes a heroine out of the strong minded, focused Janie McPherson that desired more out of her life than endless days stuck at home.

Hoffman covered a wide swath of American life through her “How America Lives” columns, and in 1947 her profile of a soft coal mining family in Harlan County, Kentucky revealed a community few readers knew about. Five days a week, 54 year old Jim Perkins folded his 5’11 body into a space scarcely 34 inches high at Yokum Creek Coal Company’s Mine No. 2.⁵⁶ Jim called it “brutish work,” and lamented: “I been crawlin’ in those mines for forty-two years now. I’m all broke up.”⁵⁷ His wife Alice and their seven children resided in a decrepit shack without running water. Neither parent made it past fifth grade, and while “Jim says he would like to see his kids educated...the problem of getting them to school defeats him.” Both Jim and his oldest son had

⁵³ Ibid, 112.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 142.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 142.

⁵⁶ Betty Hannah Hoffman, “Meet a Soft Coal Miner’s Family,” *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1947, 226.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 226.

tuberculosis, a disease that ran rampant in Harlan County as a poll “revealed that two in every hundred school children in [the county] have active tuberculosis.”⁵⁸ Jim described the life of a miner as “a man settin’ between two hills with nothing to see but a tramcar goin’ up and down, and no entertainment or nothin’.”⁵⁹ Accompanying photos by Fonn Lannelli showed Jim laying on his side in the dark, narrow mine. Other photos revealed Alice hunched over washing laundry by hand. However, the photos also showed Jim playing with his children and painted him as a devoted family man. Hoffman and photographer Lannelli forced readers to face a hidden side of American life and to witness the horrific mining conditions that hundreds of thousands of Americans inhabited. The article warranted a mention in *The New York Post* that same month that praised Betty Hannah Hoffman, who “takes us into the squalid four room shack of a Harlan County, Ky. miner.”⁶⁰ *United Mine Workers Journal* praised *Ladies Home Journal* for revealing “by all odds the best picturization of life as coal miners are forced to live that has ever appeared in a magazine of national importance.”⁶¹

In 1950, Hoffman received a letter from Bruce Gould praising her work on “How America Lives.” He rewarded her strong narrative writing style: “We are raising your price on this piece to \$1,500, which I hope starts off 1950 pleasantly for you.”⁶² Hoffman, the mother of two boys under the age of six, relied upon her *Ladies Home Journal* income to support the family when her husband left his law firm in 1950. Bob “suffered from double vision and could no longer read,” essentially relying on his wife to be the

⁵⁸ Ibid, 229.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 230.

⁶⁰ “Do Miners Insist on Squalor?,” *The New York Post*, March 5, 1947, 54.

⁶¹ “Impoverished Life of Coal Miners Vividly Illustrated in March *Ladies Home Journal*,” April 1947, 7.

⁶² Bruce Gould to Betty Hannah Hoffman [personal letter], January 3, 1950.

primary breadwinner.⁶³ Betty's income housed the family in a 200-year-old stone farmhouse in Newtown, Bucks County purchased for \$15,000.⁶⁴ *Ladies Home Journal* enabled Hoffman to travel to Holland to profile the Dutch Royal Family for three months in 1953. Printed as a six part series, the first installment, entitled "Born to Be Queen" appeared in the March 1955 issue. In the headline, Queen Julianna proclaimed: "Our child will not be raised in tissue paper...She is to be called Trix, even by the servants. We do not want her to even hear the word princess."⁶⁵ Hoffman later remembered Queen Julianna as "a warm, sensitive, nice person."⁶⁶

The Saturday Evening Post sent staff writer Marge Schier to interview Betty and her family on their farm in 1957 in an article that highlighted Betty's contributions to magazine writing. Schier herself was a working woman.

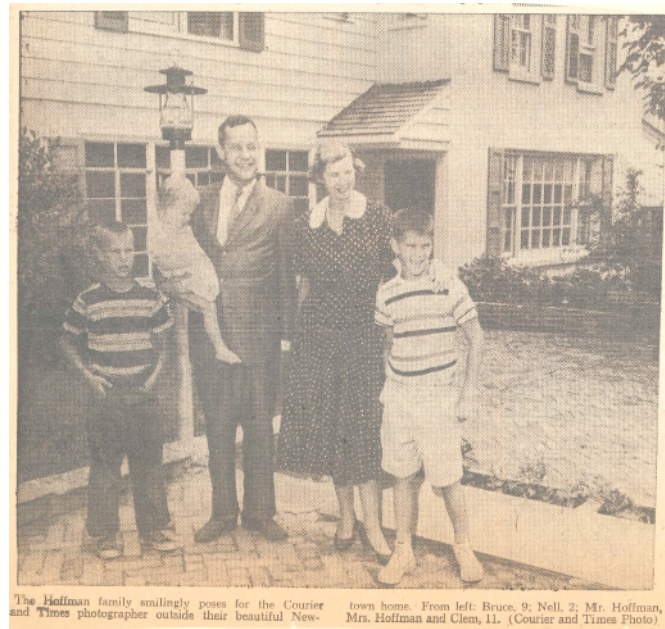


Figure Six: "The Hoffman Family smilingly poses..." *The Saturday Evening Post*, June 29, 1957.

⁶³ Betty Hannah Hoffman, *Roving Reporter*, 7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 7.

⁶⁵ Betty Hannah Hoffman, "Born to Be Queen," *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1955.

⁶⁶ Marge Schier, "Hoffmans Enjoy Bucks in Picturesque Home," *The Saturday Evening Post*, June 29, 1957.

The accompanying photograph, seen in figure six, captured Betty and Bob outside their home with their eleven-year-old son Clem, nine-year-old son Bruce, and twenty-month old daughter Nell as a smiling, content family. The article normalized Betty as a working mother, and praised her for winning “the Benjamin Franklin Writing Award for distinguished achievement in writing.”⁶⁷ Schier wrote that “Betty’s Journal articles take more time and work than the casual reader might expect,” as one article on taxes required five separate trips to St. Louis. When Betty travelled on assignment for “How America Lives,” she revealed: “I put up in a hotel, but I’m apt to park with them from 9 a.m. till midnight for five or six days.”⁶⁸ Betty managed to write while the baby napped and the older boys played outside, but also relied on a babysitter the children regarded as a grandmother. Sometimes “she comes here to babysit and I’ll go to her empty house to write.”⁶⁹ Two years later, Hoffman wrote a book about Arthur and Kathryn Murray and their dance series for Simon and Schuster, which *The Saturday Even Post* ran in serialized segments.⁷⁰

By 1962, Hoffman rejoined *Ladies Home Journal*’s staff as a contributing editor and gained a significant bump in salary to earn \$10,000 a year.⁷¹ That March, the *Journal* sent Hoffman to California to do a story about Lucille Ball, only to call her mid-assignment with news that Bruce and Beatrice Gould had resigned their posts as editor-in chiefs.⁷² While the new editor killed her story, the connection with Ball eventually led to

⁶⁷ Marge Schier, “Hoffmans Enjoy Bucks in Picturesque Home,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, June 29, 1957.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Betty Hannah Hoffman, *Roving Reporter*, 13.

⁷¹ Ibid, 16.

⁷² Ibid, 16.

“Goulds Quit the Journal; Curtis Anderson, 34, is Editor,” *The New York Times*, March 6, 1962.

a *New York Times* bestselling autobiography of Lucille Ball, ghost written by Hoffman.⁷³

Hoffman temporarily remained with the *Journal*, but clashed with the new editor in chief Curtis Anderson. Anderson, only 34 years old, struggled to oversee the *Journal* and lost his position after a tumultuous year.⁷⁴ Hoffman lost her job along with Anderson. On October 16, 1964, Bruce and Beatrice Gould wrote Hoffman a glowing letter of recommendation recounting “the privilege of working with Betty Hannah Hoffman” for over a decade.⁷⁵ They wrote, “she is an able, conscientious reporter, not easily discouraged in the pursuit of necessary facts” with “the ability to set down her story in highly readable form.” The Goulds “heartily recommend her as a reporter, writer, and editor.”⁷⁶ Anderson also wrote a recommendation, proclaiming: “Her interviews for stories produced the widest possible variety of material so urgently needed by a major magazine.”⁷⁷ The next year in January of 1965, *The New York Times* reported Betty Hannah Hoffman had been “named executive editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine.”⁷⁸

Hoffman left *Cosmopolitan* less than a year into her post, but continued to freelance for women’s magazines, including *Ladies Home Journal*, up through the 1970s. Hoffman moved westward to Berkeley, California in 1967 to edit the UC News, a publication that covered all nine campuses in the U.C. system. In 1970, the Berkeley

⁷³ “BEST SELLERS: October 13, 1996,” *The New York Times*, October 13, 1996, accessed March 24, 2014, nytimes.com.

⁷⁴ William Grimes, “Curtis Anderson, Editor and Developer of Magazines, Dies at 81,” *The New York Times*, May 28, 2010, accessed March 27, 2014, nytimes.com.

⁷⁵ Bruce and Beatrice Gould to Whom It May Concern [recommendation letter for Betty Hannah Hoffman], October 14, 1964.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Curtis Anderson to Whom It May Concern, [recommendation letter for Betty Hannah Hoffman], October 15, 1964.

⁷⁸ Walter Carlson, “Advertising: Cigarette Perks to Heed Code,” *The New York Times*, January 13, 1965, accessed September 20, 2013, nytimes.com

Hoffman worked with Helen Gurley Brown for less than year, but the two women did not see eye-to-eye on the editorial direction of *Cosmopolitan*

Daily Gazette profiled Hoffman and reported that she “gathers news from all campuses, selects, edits, and produces from scratch, right down to the layout.”⁷⁹ Living in Berkeley in the midst of the women’s liberation movement, Hoffman believed “there is a very definite need for greater opportunity and equality for women in the field of education.”⁸⁰ When Hoffman wrote her personal memoir in 2006, she began by stating: perhaps some “will be interested in how a college-educated women in the twentieth century combined marriage, children, and a career.”⁸¹ Acutely aware of the inequalities women faced, Hoffman spent her career attempting to identify and fight these injustices through her own work.

III. Maureen Daly: From *Seventeenth Summer* to her Lucrative Freelancing Career

On June 19, 1944, the newly minted college graduate Maureen Daly received a telegram containing a job offer to work at *Ladies Home Journal* under Bruce and Beatrice Gould. The telegram informed her, “Mr and Mrs Gould...would like to make [a] financial offer that would make it practical for you and your family to move to Philadelphia as we are enthusiastic about having you on our staff.”⁸² As a 21-year-old undergraduate in 1942, Daly had gained national recognition with the publication of her novel *Seventeenth Summer*. Dodd, Mead & Co. selected her manuscript *Seventeenth Summer* in the Intercollegiate Literary Fellowship contest for undergraduate writers and

⁷⁹ “‘UC News’ Editor is Noted Author,” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, August 1, 1970.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Betty Hannah Hoffman, “Roving Reporter,” 1.

⁸² Telegram to Maureen Daly, June 19, 1944, Maureen Daly Papers, Ax753, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

granted her a \$1,200 prize alongside a publication deal.⁸³ Daly was a senior at Rosary College in River Forest, Illinois majoring in English and Latin.⁸⁴ *New York Times* book reviewer Edith H. Walton praised Daly for making “an utterly enchanting book out of this very fragile little story - one which rings true and sweet and fresh and sound.”⁸⁵ Walton added that Daly “deals with one of the oldest themes in the world, the theme of first love, and deals with it in a fashion which is so unhackneyed and so fresh that one forgets how often the same story has been told before.”⁸⁶ In an interview with *The New York Times* following her publication, Daly explained her writing process: “What I’ve tried to do, you see, is just write about the things that I knew about – that meant a lot to me.” Daly strived to capture moments of youth, such as “[h]ow you feel when you go into the drug store for a coke and a boy you like is watching you, what it is like to be at a dance and have no one dance with you for a long time while you pretend that you’re doing alright.”⁸⁷ Daly credited her mother and an English teacher with encouraging her to write in school. She recounts moments of inspiration, such as: “When I was 15 years old and a boy rode up on his bike and we talked and I felt that spark – you know? – and I went home” and wrote the short story “Fifteen.”⁸⁸ Fittingly, *Ladies Home Journal* acquired Daly to edit the monthly sub-deb column.⁸⁹ The sub-deb column was created for teenage readers.

Five years later, *Life* magazine profiled Daly and her three sisters as impressive

⁸³ Robert van Gelder, “An Interview with Miss Maureen Daly,” *The New York Times*, July 12, 1942, accessed December 8, 2013, nytimes.com.

⁸⁴ Margalit Fox, “Maureen Daly, 85, Chronicler of Teenage Love, Dies,” *The New York Times*, September 29, 2006, accessed January 2, 2014, nytimes.com.

⁸⁵ Edith H. Walton, “‘Seventeenth Summer’ and Other Works of Fiction,” *The New York Times*, May 3, 1942, accessed January 2, 2014, nytimes.com.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Robert van Gelder, “An Interview With Miss Maureen Daly,” *The New York Times*.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ “Sub-deb” is an abbreviation for sub debutante.

career women to be exalted.⁹⁰ The article praised their position as “one of the most successful sister acts in current U.S. business life.”⁹¹ The eldest sister worked as a top model in a Chicago department store, the second sister worked as an account executive for a New York advertising agency, and the youngest wrote a teen-age column for the *Chicago Tribune* and 35 other newspapers. Now 27 years old, Maureen maintained her post at the *Ladies Home Journal*. The writer pointedly added that the sisters achieved their success “without appearing on the stage or screen, recording close harmonies or posing for home permanent-wave advertisements.”⁹² They all held coveted and highly competitive positions in career fields from which women were excluded from. Their combined annual salary amounted to an impressive \$100,000.⁹³ The article credits the sisters’ unprecedented success to their Irish mother, for she “packed them off to the library every week for a stack of books to study” and instilled in them “a hard driving momentum which they never lost.”⁹⁴ In an interview decades later, Daly reflected that she and her sisters “were raised as equals. There wasn’t a boy in the family to deflect attention from us; maybe that’s why we thrived.”⁹⁵ When her father left Ireland in the 1920s with his wife and three young daughters and moved to the United States, he “loved this country and thought there were great opportunities here.”⁹⁶ Both of her parents played an integral role in nurturing their four daughters’ interests and career pursuits.

An accompanying photograph shows a cozy Philadelphia living room with Maureen, her husband William McGivern, and their blond-haired eleven-month-old

⁹⁰ Daly had two older sisters and one younger sister.

⁹¹ “Career Sisters,” *Life*, November 7, 1949, 75.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 75.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁹⁵ Kimberly Olson Fakih, “The Long Wait For Maureen Daly,” *Publisher’s Weekly*, June 27, 1986, 38.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

daughter Megan. Her husband, a Philadelphia reporter, also writes mysteries, and is hunched over a desk typing while Maureen props her feet up on the couch and plays with the baby, as seen in figure seven. Maureen becomes a domestic wife in the photograph, but the accompanying text continues to highlight her working life. The article praises *Seventeenth Summer*, “that has since gone into 30 printings, been sold to the movies, translated into nine languages and was once judged by U.S. youth as their third favorite book” behind *Gone with the Wind* and *Jane Eyre*.⁹⁷



SUBDEB COLUMNIST Maureen lives with her husband, William McGivern, and their 11-month-old daughter Megan. McGivern, a Philadelphia reporter, also writes mysteries, radio scripts. He often refers to himself as “the fifth Daly sister.”

Figure Seven: “Subdeb Columnist,” *Life*, November 7, 1949, 76.

Moreover, the article focuses on the four sisters themselves as successful businesswomen and devotes little space to their husbands, aside from a humorous caption of McGivern as “the fifth Daly sister.”

During her stint at *Ladies Home Journal*, Maureen Daly gained a wide fan base as readers across the nation wrote to her seeking advice. As editor of the sub-deb column, Daly influenced many impressionable young readers. On March 8, 1948, Daly responded

⁹⁷ “Career Sisters,” *Life*, 76.

to a fan by offering her advice on college and a career. She encouraged the young woman to go to college, select a major, and “make contacts, write for interviews and investigate [your desired] field thoroughly so when your diploma is handed to you, you will know what your next step must be.”⁹⁸ She coaxed her to look beyond secretarial work, for “if secretly you’ve always thought of doing personnel or social work, or of getting into merchandising or journalism, don’t think that a secretarial position is the only thing open to you just because you took a commercial course. Look around.”⁹⁹ Daly herself represented an approachable example of a woman who succeeded in college and made a living off her writing. She ended the letter by advising: “grow up knowing where you want to go – and you’re well on your way to getting there.”¹⁰⁰

Daly’s monthly column at *Ladies Home Journal* encouraged young readers to send in inquiries about love and dating. The column, entitled “Ask Amy Daisy,” probed young readers to drop a note to Daly if they had “the blues over boy troubles, lack of dates, [or] difficulties at school.”¹⁰¹ Daly assumed a cheeky tone, and instructed young women in a 1948 column to make their date feel special, even if they have “got something special lined up for tomorrow night in the way of a six-foot-two senior with a car and a smooth line: remember that “tonight it’s a date with John for an interschool game. So keep your head on the ball – and your mind on John!”¹⁰² She advises against “playing hard to get,” and reminds girls that “[w]hen a boy calls the phone to ask for a

⁹⁸ Response to Fan Letter, March 8, 1948, Maureen Daly Papers, Ax753, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Response to Fan Letter, Maureen Daly Papers.

¹⁰¹ Maureen Daly, “Ask Amy Daisy,” *Ladies Home Journal*, February 1948, 28.

¹⁰² Ibid, 28.

date, he *wants* a date – not a lot of “call me back, I’ll tell you later” chatter.¹⁰³ She dismissed antiquated dating habits and hoped readers would embrace the change, for the “old days of peeking demurely over lace fans and rolling those baby blue eyes are over forever,” and now “boy girl friendships are more casual and spontaneous.”¹⁰⁴ The column failed to fully embody her journalistic prowess, but it gave Daly a salary and enabled her to build her portfolio.

In 1951, Daly undertook an extensive three-month assignment in Berlin, Germany to cover German opinions of the United States from a youth perspective. Daly recounted a city reeling from the aftermath of war and struggling to live alongside American occupation. Daly wrote that young Germans view Americans in an individualistic sense as “casual, wealthy, freedom-loving and without depth or culture, ‘though as generous as little children.’” When they consider the United States “as a nation affecting the destiny of Germany and the world,” their emotions invariably became more complex.¹⁰⁵ Most young Germans gleaned their impression of the U.S. from imported American movies and magazines. One unemployed young man disparaged the copious magazine advertisements for automobiles and refrigerators and other modern appliances, bitterly saying: “Those ads are just propaganda. You don’t even have half those things.”¹⁰⁶ Many pictured the United States as New York, either as a place “only for people with a lot of money” or as a place that “used to be a good place for opportunity, but it’s all filled up

¹⁰³ Ibid, 28.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 28.

¹⁰⁵ Maureen Daly, “Profile of Youth,” *Ladies Home Journal*, June 1951, 46.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 46.

and taken over by immigrants.”¹⁰⁷ Daly did not hesitate to print negative comments, and refused to glorify the United States in her piece.

In September of 1953, Daly profiled Mr. and Mrs. McCloskey for *Ladies Home Journal*’s “How America Lives” column with the headline “Meet the Mrs. \$10,000 Executive in the Home.” Jack McCloskey, “a husky young man in a tweed sports jacket” spends his days as a high school teacher in Collingswood, New Jersey making \$3,800 a year while his wife Nita stays home with their two young boys.¹⁰⁸ In addition to his job at the high school, Jack commutes hundreds of miles as a basketball player with the Sunbury Mercuries. Despite his long hours, Daly wrote that “Nita, who matches her husband’s double-job efforts with a full-sixteen hour day of her own, is as enthusiastic about their marriage as a well-paid press agent.”¹⁰⁹ The main headline of the article proclaimed: “7 a.m. to 11 p.m. – no sky-high tycoon or strong laborer works harder than a size 10 blonde with two children.”¹¹⁰ In a side column, the article surmised that it would cost the couple \$10,000 a year to hire someone to do all of the cooking, cleaning, and childcare that Nita performs as a wife and mother.¹¹¹ The article celebrates Nita, and forces readers to consider the economic assets they brought to their own household as stay at home mothers.

Beyond her duties as an editor, Daly proposed several articles to Bruce and Beatrice Gould. In November of 1952, Daly wrote to the Goulds about an article highlighting the plight of Americans adopting European orphans. The current U.S.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 46.

¹⁰⁸ Maureen Daly, “Meet the Mrs. \$10,000 Executive in the Home,” *Ladies Home Journal*, September 1953, 53-4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 155.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 153-4.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 153.

immigration policies made European adoption difficult, but Senator Benaton of Connecticut “feels that a *Journal* article on the subject could rouse public and senatorial opinion enough to have the law revised in relation and to adoptable children.”¹¹² Daly adds that when she and her husband Bill wanted to adopt a child, they “went to the American Legation, looking both prosperous and motherly, for information and were told succinctly, ‘It took a General three years to do it. I don’t see how you could expect to swing it.’”¹¹³ Daly wielded her power as a journalist to attempt to reform U.S. Immigration Laws, and her inclusion of Senator Benaton reaffirms *Ladies Home Journal*’s national influence.

After rising to become an associate editor, Daly and her husband moved to Europe in the early-fifties and both become freelance journalists. Daly contributed to *Ladies Home Journal* on and off throughout the 1950s and 1960s, but she maintained her independence as a writer.¹¹⁴ She networked with both editors and potential story subjects to generate stories, and pitched her ideas to a wide range of magazines. Many of her female writing peers also freelanced for women’s magazines as well as more general interest magazines. Looking back in 1986, Daly explained that she and her husband “lived our lives the way we wanted to, and travelled all over the world.”¹¹⁵ She retained her contacts in the publishing business and returned to the U.S. every few years. While living abroad, Daly lived in a “writing household, with two typewriters going” as she wrote her articles and her husband wrote his novels.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Business Correspondence to Bruce and Beatrice Gould, November 30, 1952, Maureen Daly Papers, Ax753, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Kimberly Olson Fakih, “The Long Wait for Maureen Daly,” 38.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 38.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 38.

In November of 1951, Daly wrote to an editor at *LOOK* magazine proposing a piece on Yugoslavia. Daly and her husband intended to visit the country, and “[*Ladies Home Journal*] is not interested in anything abroad for the moment and the other women’s magazines are out as long as I have a JOURNAL tie-in.”¹¹⁷ After checking *Reader’s Digest*, it appears “LOOK has done nothing on Yugoslavia recently and since they often do excellent pieces on youth, in U.S. and other places, my going to Yugoslavia might interest them.” She proposed two separate stories tailored to fit *LOOK*’s editorial voice and style. She pitched a story “from the youth angle, a picture-text piece on one specific Yugoslavian boy, between 18 and 22,” before also pitching “picture and caption-stories on a dozen young men and women round the country, with about a 2,000 word article on the general life, economic prospects, education, entertainment, attitudes towards current world conditions of the young people of the country.”¹¹⁸ While both stories essentially focused on youth life in Yugoslavia, she offered two distinct lenses to frame the story. Daly ended her letter with a plea, for “[i]t’s been so long since I’ve done anything for anyone but the JOURNAL, I feel I’m snapping an umbilical cord.”¹¹⁹ Despite her strong working relationship with *Ladies Home Journal*, Daly actively worked to spread her journalistic skills across a wide platform.

Decades after their careers at *Ladies Home Journal*, Daly sent Hoffman a letter that illustrates the pride they held for their former positions at the magazine. In July of 2002, Daly wrote to Hoffman to lament their mutual exclusion from “the Goulds’ long-

¹¹⁷ Letter to Diarmuid, November 27, 1951, Maureen Daly Papers, Ax753, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

ago book.”¹²⁰ Published in 1968, the Goulds’ memoir *American Story* traced their editorial leadership at the *Journal* from 1935 to 1962. Daly “expected to have a half dozen words about the fact that the *Journal* ran *Seventeenth Summer* after a freakish Gallup Poll found it was currently (back then) [the] most popular book in the U.S., after the Bible.”¹²¹ Both women lent their talents and editorial direction to the magazine, and Daly praised Hoffman, for: “You certainly should have been included and discussed since it was generally thought...that your reporting was the turnaround point for the *Journal*’s being considered important in the serious publishing world – coal mining HOW AMERICA LIVES, for instance.”¹²² Their omission from the Goulds’ memoir in 1968 still incited an impassioned response from Daly 34 years later. Hoffman’s and Daly’s articles had resonated with them throughout their life, and undoubtedly helped shape their sense of self. Daly dismissed the memoir as “essentially a shallow, missed the mark book which could have benefited from the skills, advice and writing of some of the talented people who worked at the magazine over the years.”¹²³ Indeed, the book served to emphasize the Goulds’ influence on publishing during their time at *Ladies Home Journal*, but the book neglected to acknowledge and thank the hard working staff that helped publish the *Journal* each month. By ignoring the role of their female writers, the Goulds followed a larger trend of erasing the role these women played in history.

Maureen Daly, Betty Hannah Hoffman, and Dorothy Thompson all brought their individual sensibilities to the *Ladies Home Journal*. During an era where gender norms placed middle-and-upper-class women in the home, these women carved out careers at

¹²⁰ Maureen Daly to Betty Hannah Hoffman [personal correspondence], July 13, 2002.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

one of the most successful women's magazines. These three pioneering women indirectly used *Ladies Home Journal* as a platform to inspire and validate American women in society. They imbued every article with their personal voices, while earning substantial salaries. All three women married and had children while maintaining successful careers. During the 1950s, Hoffman became the primary breadwinner in her family. The *Journal* enabled both Hoffman and Daly to travel to Europe, and gave them the economic freedom to live a comfortable life. Hoffman, Daly, and Thompson only represent a small fraction of the hundreds of women who worked and free-lanced for the *Journal*, but they embody a small but vital class of women that used women's magazines to build careers.

CONCLUSION

When Bruce and Beatrice Gould left *Ladies Home Journal* in 1962, the *New York Post* lamented “the end of an era.”¹ The article praised Beatrice for her talent “in sensing the mood of the feminine public long before it was eventually expressed.”² The *New York Times* expressed identical sentiments and declared the Goulds’ departure marked “the end of an era in the women’s magazine field.”³ The *Times* reported that under the leadership of the Goulds, “the Journal had reigned supreme for many years until the recent rise of *McCall’s*.”⁴ *Ladies Home Journal* never regained its dominance over fellow women’s magazines as subsequent editors struggled to strike the same tone the Goulds had created and sustained during their twenty-seven year reign. Many women’s magazines floundered and failed to retain readers, and by the end of the twentieth-century both *McCall’s* and *Woman’s Home Companion* had folded. *Ladies Home Journal* persevered, but the magazine today bears scant resemblance to its former identity in the 1950s. In 2011, *Ladies Home Journal* claimed an average circulation of 3.2 million readers, far below its circulation under the Goulds.⁵

Flipping through an issue of *Ladies Home Journal* today, it is easy to forget the revolutionary role the magazine played in populating its offices with smart, independent, and talented female writers and editors during the postwar period. These women worked together to challenge stereotypical views of domesticity during the 1950s through their articles.

Dorothy Thompson, Betty Hannah Hoffman, and Maureen Daly only represent a fraction of

¹ Robert S. Bird, “End of an Era – Goulds Leave Ladies Home Journal,” *New York Post*, March 6, 1962.

² Ibid.

³ “Goulds Quit the Journal; Curtis Anderson, 34, is Editor,” *The New York Times*, March 6, 1962, accessed February 4, 2014, nytimes.com.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ “Total Circ for Consumer Magazines,” Alliance for Audited Media, last modified December 21, 2013, <http://abcas3.auditedmedia.com/ecirc/magtitlesearch.asp>.

Ladies Home Journal’s exact circulation in 2011 was 3,225,863 readers.

Good Housekeeping had a circulation of 4,348,641 readers.

the female writers employed by the *Journal*, but they, along with countless others, sustained long and prosperous careers with *Ladies Home Journal*. In addition to achieving success in their careers, many of these women married and raised a family. By virtue of their identity as career women, they inherently challenged postwar gender ideals that insisted women should remain in the home. They successfully defied the image of the stereotypical American housewife, and used their positions at *Ladies Home Journal* to create a more nuanced complex image of American women in the 1950s.

A discrimination scandal at *The New York Times* in 1972 illustrates the profound sexism female reporters found in the newsrooms of more general-interest publications. While *Ladies Home Journal* cultivated a distinctly female friendly working environment from its inception, *The New York Times* continued to discriminate against female employees into the 1970s. On May 31, 1972, fifty female reporters and editors at *The New York Times* delivered a five page letter to the head of the paper, Arthur Ochs “Punch” Sulzberger, “setting out in dramatic detail the sorry lot of female workers at a newspaper whose public image – whose image of itself – was that of a liberal and benevolent institution.”⁶ The letter referenced the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and calculated that “women with comparable education, ability, and years of service were paid less than men for doing the same work.”⁷ The women broke down the statistics, and found that the *Times* employed 43 female reporters compared to 385 male reporters. The *Times* employed 33 foreign correspondents, but only three were women. There were no women on the executive masthead. At the time, Betsy Wade, the chief copy editor on the foreign desk, held the highest position of any

⁶ Nan Robertson, *The Girls in the Balcony* (New York: Random House, 1992), 7.

⁷ *Ibid*, 8.

woman at the paper. At 43 years old, Wade was married with two sons.⁸ These statistics sharply contrast with the masthead at *Ladies Home Journal*, where female editors and writers held high-level positions and asserted their prerogatives without a boardroom full of intimidating senior male executives. The gender inequalities at *The New York Times* erupted in a sex-discrimination suit and culminated in a book written by the former *Times* reporter Nan Robertson, but gender discrimination continued to permeate the workplace.

The media often profiles and heralds the female journalists that challenged barriers in general interest magazines and newspapers, but the numerous women that worked for *Ladies Home Journal* deserve recognition as pioneers in the predominantly male world of journalism. They finagled a career and an identity, all while simultaneously countering gender discrimination that attempted to push women out of the workplace. During my research, I encountered dozens and dozens of female reporters in the bi-lines of old issues of *Ladies Home Journal*. Their names have faded with time, but all of them played an integral role in overcoming barriers in the workplace. Betty Friedan attempted to discredit these women in *The Feminine Mystique*, but my thesis aimed to show the momentous role the female writers and editors played in empowering women.

Throughout the 1950s, *Ladies Home Journal* encouraged women to engage in politics, to take pride in their gender, to take charge of their sexual experiences, and to support the notion that women could both work and be mothers. The “How America Live” series profiled a wide swath of economically diverse American families, from the coal mining family in Kentucky to the married working mother in Georgetown. The series illustrated the complexities within American families, and showed female readers that they could be a mother and a wife without losing their individual identity. Margaret Hickey and Dorothy

⁸ Ibid, 7.

Thompson urged female readers to campaign for social change in their monthly columns, while countless staff writers, like Betty Hannah Hoffman and Maureen Daly, consistently celebrated the achievements of women in their articles. Collectively, *Ladies Home Journal* helped combat the image of a glamorized 1950s housewife through its monthly magazine.

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Figure Two: Stuart, "How do the men feel about women workers?" *Ladies Home Journal*, August 1942, 27.

Figure Three: "Late for Graduation," *Life*, June 26, 1950, 45.

Figure Four: "Never Underestimate the Power of a Woman!" *Ladies Home Journal* accessed February 14, 2014, www.lhj.com.

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