Bluestockings on Campus: Women at Smith College and Vassar College in the Nineteenth Century

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Introduction

> "How many conquests does the blue-stocking make through her extensive knowledge of history? What man ever fell in love with a woman because she understood Italian?"
>
> -Herbert Spencer[1]

The first generation of women to earn college degrees in the United States was met with extreme skepticism throughout their pursuit of an advanced education. Students at the Seven Sisters colleges in the nineteenth century faced a myriad of criticism and anxieties from the public, popular thinkers and academics, and their own families. Long standing fears and prejudices remained part of the national conversation on educated women even as schools like Smith College and Vassar College provided liberal arts educations to thousands of female students comparable to those available to men at Harvard and Yale. The label "bluestocking" encompassed many of those fears. Although the term "bluestocking" came to be an insult by the time Vassar College granted degrees to its first classes of female students in the 1860s, it did not originate as a demeaning term, or even an exclusively female term. "Bluestocking" originated in the eighteenth century to refer to the members of elite intellectual circles that met in London. Women within these circles such as Elizabeth Vesey and Elizabeth Montagu created a network of women who believed that women needed the same kind of intellectual stimulation enjoyed by educated men.[2] As more women joined this community and created public personas built around intellectual accomplishment, female friendships, piety, and social responsibility, the term took on a female connotation.[3] When social theorist Herbert Spencer used the term in the nineteenth

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[1] Amélie Rives, "Innocence Versus Ignorance," *The North American Review* 155 (1892). 290.
[2] Betty A. Schellenberg, "The Bluestockings and the Genealogy of the Modern Novel," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (Fall 2010).1.
[3] Ibid.

century to criticize women with extensive intellectual abilities, bluestocking had morphed into an insult for any woman whose learning approached that of a college-educated man. The bluestocking was a caricature of the educated woman. She was heartless, conceited, unappealing, emasculating, and guilty of ostentatiously displaying her intellect.[4] It could have been used against any student at the Seven Sisters Colleges in the late nineteenth century, and it reflected the critiques, anxieties, and expectations that these students navigated in their daily lives.

In the century leading up to the establishment of Vassar College, women's education in the United States and the American colonies grew from basic literacy to opportunities for higher education on par with men's colleges. Most girls in colonial America received an education that did not extend far beyond basic literary training. In towns and cities young boys and girls learned arithmetic, oral pronunciation, letter and word formation, and elementary spelling and reading either in their family homes or at privately funded schools.[5] Across the American colonies, boys and girls were taught reading before writing; however, while most boys went on to be educated in writing, girls' education was more likely to end after learning only basic reading skills.[6] The New England region provided the best educational opportunities to boys and girls. In these colonies, locally supported public schools educated young children but were often only fully available to boys. Public schools that admitted girls provided limited instruction in the early mornings and afternoon.[7]

In the years between 1790 and 1850 there was a significant increase in female schooling in the United States. Several factors contributed to this growth. Chief among them

[4] Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand & Speak: Women's Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). 99-100.
[5] Ibid., 35.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

was the increasingly favorable public opinion of female education as something that was useful to American society.[8] Popular American theorists like Benjamin Rush advocated for the increased education of women using the doctrine of what historians have called "republican motherhood." This idea held that the nation's women should be educated so they could raise virtuous citizens that would uphold the American experiment in the future.[9] However, also important to the expansion of women's education was the belief that women needed skills necessary to help manage their husbands' businesses, run efficient homes, contribute thoughtful conversation to social groups, and improve their own health and well-being.[10] The ideal of the Christian wife and mother acting as a spiritual guide of her family that rose to prominence during the Second Great Awakening also necessitated an expansion of female education.[11] Also, the belief that women as human beings had the same potential for intellectual attainment as men was central to the Enlightenment thinking that ran parallel to the American Revolution. Enlightenment conceptions of human nature held that the ability to think rationally differentiated humans and animals.[12] Following this logic, women, as human beings, could partake in abstract reasoning and benefit from exposure to arts and sciences.[13] Some argued it could even be considered cruel to deny women the opportunity to use their nature-given intellect.

Private concerns also made more families likely to send their daughters to school. Demographic changes made women the majority in some parts of the country and created a

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[8] Barbara M. Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1985).15.
[9] Margaret A. Nash, *Women's Education in the United States, 1780-1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).27.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*. 16.
[12] Nash, *Women's Education in the United States, 1780-1840*. 15
[13] Ibid.

problem for parents with unmarried daughters. Many of these families understood the utility of educating their daughters so they could support themselves as schoolteachers and alleviate their family's financial pressures.[14] At the same time, industrialization in the Northeast altered the domestic needs of the household and removed many domestic tasks that had previously been performed by young women. As a result young women became less housebound and had more time for academics.[15] These ideas and changes allowed for the development of female academies and seminaries in the early nineteenth century that provided more advanced secondary educations than what had been available to women in the past.

Despite the expansion of female education in the early nineteenth century, the road to higher education was very different for women in various social classes. Parents of wealthy American girls often readily paid for elite academy educations to keep their daughters busy, under control, and perhaps, to enhance her marriage prospects.[16] However, women in the middling and poorer classes often continued to work in textiles or manufacturing to earn their own money, and, with their parents' permission, use their savings to fund their education at local schools.[17] An informal process evolved in which girls both attended and taught at local district schools and used their earnings to attend academies. Some academies also implemented scholarship funds and work-study programs to help some students who could not afford the expensive tuition on their own.[18] Female education innovators and advocates from different class backgrounds in New England founded many of the famous academies and seminaries that served as prototypes for

[14] Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women.* 16.
[15] Ibid.17.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*. 24.

women's institutions in the West and South and precursors to the Seven Sisters colleges. Women like Emma Willard, Catherine Beecher, Zilpah Grant and Mary Lyon struggled to acquire an education, set up their own institutions for the education of women, and advocate for expanded educational opportunities for women.[19] The elite academies and seminaries of the early nineteenth century offered students courses in mathematics, American history, geography, sciences, rhetoric, philosophy, and modern languages. The most advanced schools even controversially incorporated lessons in classical languages.[20] These institutions set the stage for mid-century women to earn college degrees alongside men.

While the Seven Sisters schools were not the first institutions in the United States to grant college degrees to women, they were unique in that they created a new environment devoted entirely to providing women with liberal arts education for women in a community of female scholars, removed from the traditional guardianship of the family. The "Seven Sisters" refers to a series of seven women's colleges in the Northeastern United States established in the late nineteenth century. They include Vassar, Wellesley, Radcliffe, Barnard, Mount Holyoke, Smith, and Bryn Mawr.[21] In 1865 Vassar College was the first of these institutions to open. Located in Poughkeepsie, New York, the college was founded with the goal of providing a liberal arts education to women, comparable to those offered to men at Yale and Harvard.[22] Students at Vassar were remarkably diverse compared to the students at other Seven Sisters. Vassar women came from many different regions of the United States, ranged in age from fifteen to twenty-four, and differed widely in educational

[19] Ibid. 17.
[20] Ibid. 23.
[21] Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth Century Beginning* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984). 260.
[22] Horowitz, *Alma Mater*. 29.

background.[23] Smith College opened a decade later in 1875 in Northampton, Massachusetts. Unlike Vassar, Smith was designed to keep students integrated in the local community of Northampton.[24] The school was intended to replicate the elite education available to men at nearby Amherst College but keep the college women separate from Amherst's reputation for rowdiness and immorality. Unlike the regionally diverse Vassar cohort, Students at Smith were likely to be local Massachusetts or New England women. [25]

The diaries and letters written by nineteenth century students at these schools paint a portrait of a diverse group of women, with different familial and educational backgrounds, personalities, and interests. Christine Ladd, who attended Vassar from 1866 to 1869, kept an extensive girlhood diary before she attended Vassar and a shorter volume to document her time at college. Ladd came from Connecticut, although she also lived in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, away from her family home, while attending an all-girls school and an elite coeducational preparatory school before starting college. The girlhood diary Ladd kept during the Civil War documents her grief over the death of her mother and her anxiety over her father's remarriage and the introduction of her stepmother into her family. She also often wrote about her intense emotional struggles with religion and feelings of self-hatred and inadequacy. Even as a young teenager, Ladd wrote about her dream of getting a college education. After she read about the plans for Vassar years before the school opened, she periodically discussed her strategies to convince her father and other family members to send her there. Ladd's father did not have the financial means to fund the entirety of her collegiate education so she had to rely on other family

[23] Ibid. 62.
[24] Ibid.75.
[25] Ibid. 71.

members and leave Vassar for a short time to work as a teacher for tuition money. Ladd often wrote about her interest in issues such as abolition and suffrage, and she wrote in favor of expanded rights for women and freedmen. During her first months at Vassar she expressed her disappointment with the lack of students who had equal passion for women's rights, as well as with the presence of Confederate sympathizers at the school.

Anne Southworth attended Vassar from 1878 to 1882 and kept two large diaries and a scrapbook that document almost every aspect of her life at college. Like other students at Vassar, Southworth often wrote about her friends and activities such as holding food parties known as "spreads," going on excursions off campus, and enjoying various school celebrations. Southworth was close friends with Sutematsu Yamakawa and Shige Nagai, some of the first Japanese women to earn college degrees and the first students of color to graduate from Vassar. Southworth's home life was much more stable than Ladd's. Before coming to Vassar, she lived in a small town near Boston with her parents and an older brother. She commented in her diary that unlike many of her friends, her family was wealthy enough to easily fund all four years of her college education. She also wrote about the many campus activities she participated in, especially the Delta chapter of Philalethian, Vassar's literary society. Southworth was very confident, short-tempered, and unafraid to clash with various Lady Principals over school rules and policies. She tended to write about the more dramatic side of college life and recorded many rumors, intrigues, and disputes among the students.

Esther Brooks was a student at Smith College from 1878 to 1882, the same time Anne Southworth attended Vassar. Known as "Daisy" to her friends and family, an extensive series of letters between Brooks and her mother illustrates her college life. Like

Southworth, Brooks was from a small Massachusetts town near Boston. Her younger sister Frona also attended Smith, and their time at the school overlapped for a few years. Brooks was a very caring person. She often asked her mother for advice or ingredients for homeopathic medicine to help treat any friends who got sick. When one of her teachers became dangerously ill, she repeatedly asked her mother if she could drop out of Smith and use her tuition money to fund the teacher's recovery. Brooks was a religious Christian and wrote about her experience teaching Sunday school at the local church and participating in Smith's Unity Club that brought Christian students of different denominations together.

This paper explores how the students at Vassar College and Smith College navigated the major critiques and concerns of the public in their daily lives in the late nineteenth century during these schools' first decades of operation. First, I examine how the strict rules and regulations put in place by the schools' administrations shaped students' lives in a way that severely limited their freedom. I also examine how students gained more independence by rebelling against the rules and using collective action to lobby school officials for more rights and freedoms. Next, I explore how students navigated romantic relationships and the possibility of marriage. While administrators severely limited any interaction between female students and young men that could be perceived as inappropriate, very few students mentioned marriage as an important goal during their time in school or exhibited much interest in meeting potential suitors. However, intense romantic relationships between women were an important part of Vassar's campus culture and students' lives outside of college. Next, I find that popular theories regarding higher education for women as being inherently harmful to their bodies' development motivated students to demonstrate their good health through gaining weight and practicing intense

exercise regimens. Students even adopted some of the same principles as those who argued against their presence in higher education to improve their health. I also argue that despite the few career opportunities available to women in the nineteenth century, women at Vassar and Smith were unenthusiastic about pursuing the low-paying, low-status careers considered acceptable female vocations and instead aspired to earn advanced degrees and elite, male-dominated careers. Ultimately, I argue that students at Smith and Vassar did not react to popular anxieties over their new place in higher education by behaving according to the preexisting ideal of middle class white womanhood as was expected. Instead, women at these schools carved a unique space in which they could exert their independence and embrace an alternative middle class ideal that allowed for different intellectual, romantic, and professional opportunities for women.

School Rules and Regulations

In an effort to lighten the public's harsh scrutiny of the new environment the Seven Sisters colleges created for middle class, educated white women outside of the home and away from their families' supervision, the administration at these schools designed a strict system of control through sets of rules and regulations. At Smith and Vassar these strict rules governed almost every aspect of students' lives and regulated the entirety of their daily schedule. This system of control was intended to convince students' middle class families and the general public that these young women would remain safely feminine while living away from their family home.[26] Administration wanted to replicate the familial setting as much as possible. Even though students were no longer subject to parental guardianship at college, they would still be engaging in chaste, respectable behavior through the guardianship of school officials. However, while the administration at Smith and Vassar attempted to legitimize women's higher education through strict regulation of student behavior, women at these schools frequently wrote in their diaries and letters about their frustration with the rules and their desire for more independence. These students gained some independence from the strict system of control through breaking rules and rebelling against school authority. Students also used collective action to gain more freedom at college and lobby administration to change rules they felt infringed upon their rights as students and young adults. Students at Smith and Vassar developed successful methods of student organizing that included physical demonstrations, petition writing, meetings of the student body, and the formation of committees to negotiate with school officials.

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[26] Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987). 201.

The development of Vassar's of rules and regulations demonstrates how school officials attempted to replace the parental guardianship that controlled young women's behavior at home with their own guardianship. This system of control was intended to make a campus for women's higher education appear to be in keeping with the conventions of respectable white womanhood, especially standards of sexual purity. Parents would know their daughters were protected even from allegations of the immoral behavior that many college men engaged in. By design, it severely limited students' independence. The school's first president, John Raymond, hired Hannah Lyman to be Vassar's first Lady Principal and enforce a system of control over the students that she learned as a student and teacher at Ipswich Female Seminary.[27]

Enforcing rules was especially challenging at Vassar because of how the student dormitories were designed. In most living spaces five students lived in one suite with three bedrooms organized around one parlor. The only door leading to the outside corridor was located in the parlor. Because bedrooms were not easily accessible to monitors from the outside corridor, students had a remarkable amount of privacy that made it difficult to supervise living spaces and maintain control.[28] To combat this, Lyman created a system in which subordinate female "corridor teachers" lived with students in the dormitories and regulated the behavior of students in each corridor. Lyman, subsequent Lady Principals, and corridor teachers monitored every aspect of their students' lives including exercise, study, clothing, bathing, meal times, and outside visitors. Because Smith College opened a decade after Vassar, the school's architects designed student living spaces to avoid the problems Vassar administration had with controlling students in the dormitories. Instead

[27] Horowitz, *Alma Mater.* 39.
[28] Ibid.

of living together in one large building, Smith students lived in a series of cottages headed by two female faculty members called house matrons.[29] This arrangement was meant to replicate a familial setting with two female parents and allowed for less student privacy and a more easily regulated student body.

Anne Southworth, a student at Vassar from 1878 to 1882, included an 1877 edition of the Vassar College Students' Manual in her scrapbook that documented her time at the college. The student manual illustrates how the strict system of control remained at Vassar long after the death of Hannah Lyman in 1871. The presence of the manual in Southworth's scrapbook among papers for student programs and commencement ceremonies shows how significant these rules were to her college experience. Signal bells regulated students' schedule every day of the week, including weekends. A different number of strokes indicated what students should be doing. Every weekday morning at 6:30 a.m., students were awoken by ten strokes and expected to be at the dining hall by the time they heard the four strokes that signaled breakfast time. The bells rang when students were expected to observe silent time between 7:55 a.m. and 8:10 a.m. and again in the evening between 9:15 p.m. and 9:35 p.m. The bells also divided up the day into study hours and prayer time until finally another ten strokes at 9:50 p.m. indicated lights out. Although the manual displayed a less regulated schedule for Saturday and Sunday, it did still mandate that students be awake at 7:15 a.m. and present for meals at the correct time.[30] During silent time and study hours students were not permitted to leave their rooms or talk to other students. Students were not allowed to wake up or study any time before the rising signal bell unless they had

[29] Horowitz. *Alma Mater.* 75.
[30] Scrapbook of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1878-1882, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York. 113-114.

the permission of the resident physician and the knowledge of the corridor teacher. After the Lights Out signal, students were not permitted to make any noise or even light a lamp unless absolutely necessary. Absences or tardiness in any class, mandated physical exercise, meal, or other event scheduled by the administration required a formal application for excuse made to the college president through the resident physician in the case of illness, or made to the Lady Principal in any other case. Any students with unexcused absences or instances of tardiness were called before the president at the end of the week and asked for an explanation.[31] The president and faculty needed to approve any general meeting of students, establishment of a new student society, or student sponsored lecturer, and the Lady Principal supervised any social entertainment.[32] Students' parents had to write to the Lady Principal to give permission for their daughters to receive any visitors from outside the college. Students were not allowed to have any visitors who had not been formally approved by a parent and visitors were limited to public rooms on campus.[33] The Lady Principal and her staff of corridor teachers ensured students acted appropriately in all parts of the school and reserved the right to inspect student parlors and bedrooms at any time.[34]

What resulted from this code of rules and regulations was a highly regimented student schedule that could convince parents and the general public that students were under the capable guardianship of school authorities, behaving in ways that befitted middle class white women. If every minute of students' schedules were regimented they would not be able to engage in any immoral activities they would not have engaged in at home. The

[31] Scrapbook of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1878-1882, 113.
[32] Ibid., 115.
[33] Ibid,. 116.
[34] Ibid., 115.

system helped to justify allowing young women to move away from the guardianship of their parents since they would just be moving to the capable guardianship of the college administration. However, in their diaries and letters students expressed frustration with this system of control and wished for the independence given to male college students. Christine Ladd wrote in her diary about her disappointment with Vassar College during her first few weeks at the school in September 1866. She wrote that the "multiplicity of petty rules" were an important reason for her negative view of the school. Ladd compared the highly regulated schedule of Vassar with the freedom college men experienced at other institutions when she wrote, "I so despise the idea that women are not as competent to take care of themselves as men, that they cannot decide for themselves when to go to bed and when to get up, how much exercise to take, how much to pray and go to church."[35] Ladd was conscious of how much her daily life differed from the lives of college men. Although Vassar supposedly offered an education comparable to that offered at the elite men's colleges, women college students like Christine Ladd felt that the strict system of control and the administration's need to prove that its students were under the protection of school officials despite the absence of their families' guardianship was demeaning and detrimental to her experience at Vassar.

Frances M. Bromley, another student at Vassar, also wrote in 1876 about her frustration with the school's overbearing schedule. She struggled to find something new to write about in her diary because "What is really worth telling in days that are marked off and divided up before they come? When one knows the thing they'll be doing up to the fraction of a minute. Can calculate on anything except the way the wind will blow to the

[35] The Diary of Christine Ladd-Franklin, 1866-1873, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 22 September 1866, 4.

sixth decimal place!"[36] Bromley's experience exemplifies how students could feel stifled by the administration's strict enforcement of the signal bells schedule. Both Ladd and Bromley's diaries show how students were frustrated with the strict rules and regulations of college life and wanted for more independence. However, many students rebelled against this system by breaking or bending rules in an effort to gain more freedom on campus.

Christine Ladd, who expressed her frustration with the many rules Vassar students were expected to follow, also recorded an episode in her diary in 1866 in which she argued with her corridor teacher, Miss Clarke, over the bathing schedule. She wrote, "Last night I was guilty of impertinence, even insolence towards the corridor teacher." After Miss Clarke assigned her a bathing hour, she refused to use that hour and said she would prefer to bathe in her room. Ladd wrote that the other girls who witnessed the incident said Ladd looked "exceedingly angry."[37] Although Ladd later felt guilty about the incident and wished she had apologized, her actions show that she went beyond complaining about Vassar's overbearing schedule in her diary and occasionally took steps to rebel against it.

Anne Southworth also wrote in her diary about various individual acts of rule breaking and rebellion that she and her classmates took in an effort to gain more independence from Vassar school authority. In 1879 she described an instance in which her friend Jessie's room was going to be inspected by her corridor teacher, Mrs. Johns. Before Mrs. Johns could make it into the room, Jessie locked the door so she could rub out pictures she had drawn on the wall and hide an extra pillow she had smuggled into the school since students were only allowed one pillow. Jessie was then able to avoid an inspection by

[36] Diary of Frances M. Bromley, 1876-1877, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 31 October 1876, 26.
[37] Diary of Christine Ladd-Franklin, 1866-1873, 10 October 1866, 8.

feigning studiousness and telling Mrs. Johns that her roommate was not home.[38] Students like Jessie subverted the strict rules governing student dormitories in an effort to assert their independence and individuality in their own rooms.

Southworth also recorded an incident from that same year in which she and a friend left campus unauthorized and walked into town a little before silent time when all students were expected to be in their rooms. While walking, the girls met another student who warned them that a group of students led by the Lady Principal would be traveling down the same road on their way to an excursion at West Point. To avoid being spotted by the Lady Principal on their covert journey, the girls hid under a hedge and on a side street until the excursion passed them.[39] This diary entry involves three students who left school unauthorized and took steps to avoid being caught for it. Although administration at Vassar worked to limit the behavior of students, students like Anne Southworth asserted their independence by breaking rules and often avoiding facing consequences for these actions.

One of the primary ways the administration at both Smith and Vassar tried to keep students obedient to the schedule bells and various rules seems to have been through lectures from the president or other prominent faculty members. Students often mentioned and complained about lectures on rule breaking in their writing. Although diaries and letters indicate that these lectures usually took place during chapel, Ellen Skeel's diary details a more personal lecture from the president of Vassar in 1869. Skeel and two other women were singled out for having other students in their parlor past 11:00 p.m. The other two students found an excuse to leave, so Skeel was stuck being lectured by the president

[38] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1878-1880, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 9 February 1879, 115.
[39] Ibid., 18 May 1879, 174.

alone.

> He talked and I talked, and I grieve to say he came off nefarious, and after a quarter of an hour's lecture, excused me. If I should be asked what was rung in our ears from morning till night, (in the ears of us Seniors, I mean) I should say "Example" Example - example to lower classes! And I think it was too bad - I had made such good resolutions this year to keep rules and to set an *example* because I was a Senior and now, before two months have passed to be obliged to take a reprimand from the President, for breaking a rule! But I do think the College is sliding backward, when the *President* speaks to the *Senior Class about sitting up too late.*[40]

Although Skeel felt shamed by the president's lecture and mentioned her resolutions to follow the rules in order to set an example to younger students, she still thought it demeaned Vassar that the president of the school felt it was necessary and appropriate to lecture seniors about staying up too late. Skeel and other older students were asked to set an example for the younger students through their obedience to school rules. However, even Skeel, who set a resolution to follow all the rules that year, got in trouble for deviating from what administration considered appropriate behavior. The prevalence of rule breaking in diaries and letters, especially among juniors and seniors, suggests that older students were setting another kind of example for the younger generation of students.

Women at these schools could operate outside of the mandated schedule and school rules, especially if they did it together. Students often broke rules in large groups during celebrations or holidays when they felt they had a right to more freedom and fun than other days. Anne Southworth wrote in 1878 about the Vassar students' tendency to break rules on Halloween night. She wrote, "there is more cutting up Hallowe'en than any other night in the year; everybody is up to something and every teacher is on watch." Southworth recorded how the seniors paraded around outside and in the corridor during silent hours

[40] The Diary of Ellen Skeel Adee, 1869-1870, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 18 December 1869, 73-73.

while other students made loud noises after lights out by popping bags filled with air and played tricks on each other all night.[41] Gertrude Gane, a student at Smith College, wrote about a similar episode at her school in a letter to her mother in 1892. When the president of Smith mentioned in a speech that 2:00 a.m. that night would mark the four hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Americas the students planned a late night celebration without the knowledge of the house matrons assigned to monitor the student living spaces. Students woke up in the middle of the night so they could celebrate, sing, and set off firecrackers. Hubbard House, where Gane lived, blasted a horn at 2:00 a.m. to wake up the rest of campus and the girls danced a Virginia reel by candlelight. The next morning Gane wrote that her house matron said the celebration was "a low, vulgar thing to do," but neither she nor the rest of the disapproving faculty did anything to punish the students since there were no rules "that say we must not arise at 2 a.m. and have a grand 'hullivaloo.'"[42] The President gave them a "long harangue" in chapel over the celebration saying the students "were most vulgar, no longer gentlewomen, he didn't think it of us, etc." However, Gane noted that instead of making the students regret their actions, the lecture annoyed the students as they felt it was an overreaction to their once-in-a-hundred-years celebration.[43] Gane and Southworth's accounts show that students felt justified in breaking or bending rules as a group in order to experience freedom and fun during their occasional celebrations. The students found that they were less likely to be punished during these collective rebellions in which they broke from their regulated daily schedules and engaged in "vulgar" behavior. Women at Vassar and Smith also worked together in a more formal

[41] The Diary of Anne Southworth, 1878-1880, 31 October – 1 November 1878, 48-50.
[42] Gertrude Gane to mother, 14 October 1892, Student Letters Collection, Smith College Special Collections Archive, Northampton, Massachusetts.
[43] Ibid.

manner to resist the system of control, advocate for their rights, and convince the administration to make changes to school policies.

At Vassar it was typical for students to meet in order to appoint a committee to organize student activities and settle disputes with the administration. Anne Southworth detailed the nomination process and activities of such committees throughout her diaries. For example, in 1879 the Students' Association met to appoint a committee that would draw up resolutions to send flowers to the families of two employees at the school who had died. Students from all the collegiate classes were nominated to the committee after a small controversy about whether to appoint a representative from the "special" students who were taking classes at Vassar but not earning degrees.[44] Southworth also wrote about a similar episode from the same year in which students organized as a class for their own purposes. Southworth's class sent a petition to their Greek professor, asking for an alteration to the curriculum.[45] Although it appears they were unsuccessful in changing the course, the students' petition shows how they were willing to work together to shape their education experience. The students' use of petitions to achieve their goals is also interesting. The circulation of petitions was established in the nineteenth century as one of the primary ways American women exerted their limited political power, especially among female antislavery activists such as Sarah and Angelina Grimké.[46] Vassar women shared this method of collective action with women's rights activists operating around the same time.[47] Students were accustomed to using techniques like petitions and meetings of the student body to advocate on their own behalf and realize goals.

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[44] Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1878-1880, 23 February 1879, 131.
[45] Ibid., 15 June 1879, 183.
[46] Daniel Carpenter and Colin D. Moore, "When Canvassers Became Activists: Antislavery Petitioning and the Political Mobilization of American Women," *American Political Science Review* 108, no. 3 (August 2014).480.
[47] Carpenter and Moore, "When Canvassers Become Activists," 493.

Students used collective action to resist the Vassar system of control though methods such as forming committees to lobby members of the administration, making petitions, and holding physical demonstrations. In 1881 Anne Southworth wrote in her diary about how the students called a class meeting after the increasing student population at Vassar caused a room shortage in the dormitories. Southworth and her fellow students objected to the new way the Lady Principal Mrs. Ray was assigning rooms and decided to send Mrs. Ray a petition.[48] The students called additional meetings and formed a committee to negotiate with Mrs. Ray after they failed to get the resolution they wanted.[49] When this failed as well, the committee appealed to the college president. Finally, after the committee lobbied multiple members of the faculty, administration, and student body, Mrs. Ray settled the rooming dispute in a way that pleased the students.[50] Southworth and other students at Vassar frequently wrote about this process of meeting as a student body, discussing and debating the problem, forming committees, and negotiating directly with school officials. Within the first generation at Vassar, students developed a systematic and democratic way to collectively resolve disputes with administration.

Anne Southworth described another incident in which the students worked together to show their dissatisfaction with school administration and articulate their rights as students. In 1881 the Vassar president gave a lecture in chapel chastising students for missing chapel and not reporting it. Because most of the students who had been absent from chapel were seniors, the senior class held "an indignation meeting, and they sent to the president a statement of what they thought their senior rights." Although the seniors

[48] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1880-1882, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 29 May 1881, 120-121.
[49] Ibid., 30 May 1881, 126.
[50] Ibid., 3 June 1881, 134.

were graduating soon and the president insisted that missing chapel was not one of their privileges, the class sent the statement "for the future classes" so they would have more independence at school than previous classes.[51] Students were willing to express their protests of school rules in terms of their rights as young women and students.

Another diary entry from Anne Southworth shows how students at Vassar combined this rhetoric about rights with the established democratic system of student collective action. This time it concerned students' belief that they were entitled to the same living conditions enjoyed by the faculty. Southworth wrote about a student strike at Vassar in 1879 over the poor quality of the food served to students. Southworth and her fellow students complained that food served to faculty, which they could clearly see since faculty and students ate in the same room at different tables, was much better than the food served to students. As mostly middle class and wealthy women, students probably felt entitled to the quality of food they ate at home. Southworth highlighted the students' frustration with the indifference and condescension from faculty and administration during their strike.

> We are having a Strike. Lately the food has been very much poorer than before. Also the butter has been unclean. There was a meeting of the Students Association and a complaint made and a committee of four were appointed to remedy matters. Miss Hays was chairman of the committee. Last night it was called again and the committee said that Prexy [President] said it was to Mrs. Ray they should go. So they read a letter that they had written to Mrs. Ray. It was objected to as being to[o] strong and unbusiness like. Then followed 3/4 hour of wrangling and nothing was accomplished. I think the letter was too strong. We could get on very well if things were perfectly clean. But it makes me mad to see better things go onto the faculty table… I think something will be done about it, as the girls are much in earnest. [52]

The food strike started with the method of collective action that Southworth and others at Vassar wrote about many times in their diaries. The student body met to appoint a

[51] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1880-1882, 3 June 1881, 140.
[52] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1878-80, 9 February 1879, 142-143.

committee that would address the problem with school officials. The committee created a written list of demands and the class debated how to best address the problem. A few days later the school president gave a speech to the students that indicated to Southworth "the petition would amount to nothing." She interpreted the speech in her diary as a message to the students saying, "You are young and foolish. We are wise and in authority over you. Your grievance is all imaginary. You have taken a very weak and ineffectual way to redress yourselves."[53] Her anger throughout this strike is directed at the administration and especially the president, first for disrespecting the students' rights by providing them with subpar food and then for not taking their strike seriously.

Mary Reed, a student at Vassar from 1891 to 1895, also documented an instance of students using collective action and a physical demonstration to protest the actions of Vassar administration in infringing upon something students felt entitled to. Reed wrote about different celebrations at Vassar throughout her diary. One event she wrote about every year she attended college was Washington's Birthday celebrations, which often involved students dressing up in costumes and decorating their tables in the dining hall. She described the students' actions in 1894 when those beloved celebrations were suddenly canceled.

> The Seniors, went to dinner in mourning for the death of the memory of the founder of our country - the tables were decorated to correspond also. The Student Body issued a Declaration of Patriotism etc. etc. - We all tried in every way to make the faculty realize what a grave mistake they have made in doing this.[54]

If students at Vassar felt that administration had acted unfairly or done something that many students understood as a violation of their rights, they were clearly willing to protest

[53] Ibid., 16 February 1879, 144.
[54] The Diary of Mary Reed Earl, 1891-1895, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, NY February 1894, 58.

the offending action together. It must have taken careful planning, negotiation, and cooperation, such as in the class meetings described by Anne Southworth, for a significant number of the seniors at Vassar in 1894 to coordinate their outfits and table decorations. It is telling that Reed would consider the cancellation of a student celebration such a "grave mistake" on the part of the faculty. The annual event was one of the few times during the school year that students at the school were allowed to break from the strict schedule of study time, recitations, and lessons. Reed's diary shows that the students felt that the loss of this small freedom warranted collective action to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with administration.

Vassar students also used collective action and physical demonstrations in more informal ways to protest less serious offenses from administration. In 1866 Sarah L. Stilson wrote in her diary about an incident that began after President Raymond told students in a lecture during chapel that outdoor exercise was especially beneficial in rainy weather, and students were still expected to do their mandatory exercise on rainy days. Two students, Hattie Griggs and Nellie Baker, planned an "impromptu illustration of his speech" by organizing two hundred students in a single file march past the president's window in what they called the "water-proof brigade." Stilson described the sight of so many "solemn black hooded figures like a train of monks filing towards the catacombs." She wrote that the Lady Principal Miss Lyman was "enraged at the girls' impertinence," but the President treated the protest as a joke.[55] Stilson's estimate of two hundred students is fairly impressive for an impromptu march at Vassar in 1866, considering it would have consisted of almost two thirds of the student body. Even in the first year the school was open, the students were

[55] The Diary of Sarah L. Stilson, 1865-1869, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 3 Mar 1866, 16.

willing to use collective, physical demonstrations to show their dissatisfaction with some of the administration's interferences in their lives.

There is some evidence that students' collective and individual efforts to protest the strict system of control at Vassar led to changes in school rules that allowed for more student autonomy. Anne Southworth wrote about her happiness over rule changes in her diary. In October of 1881, she described the new students' manual that revised the regulations to allow student absences to be excused if they were not too frequent of an occurrence. Students were still expected to only be absent in the case of a medical issue excused by the resident physician, but now they could also occasionally be absent for other reasons without fear of repercussions. This meant that students had more freedom outside the mandated school schedule. Southworth felt that the new rule change "is treating us like rational human beings" since it took into account the fact that students could have logical reasons for missing class that were not necessarily medical.[56] Southworth also wrote about the students' happiness in 1882 when silent time was abolished and the schedule was altered to make the rising and breakfast bells ring a half hour later. She remarked that that change in schedule was a "revolution" that "astounded" all the students.[57] Not only did the schedule changes allow students to sleep in later, the elimination of silent time would have allowed students more time to interact with each other and more freedom to move about campus since silent time had previously required that all students be in their individual rooms and completely silent. Although Southworth does not mention what prompted the rule change, it does show that students gained more independence over time.

Because many students at Vassar and Smith such as Christine Ladd became involved

[56] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1880-1882, 1 October 1881, 194.
[57] Ibid., 12 February 1882, 257.

with feminist activism and suffrage organizations after their time at college and into the twentieth century, it is reasonable to believe that they first learned methods of collective action that would become integral to the fight for women's rights at college in the decades leading up to the establishment of the Nineteenth Amendment. While in college, students challenged the authority of school officials and the fairness of school rules as they would later challenge male authority figures and laws that designated them as second-class citizens. Students also learned how to articulate their rights and create lists of demands while circulating petitions and drawing up resolutions during meetings of the student body. Ellen Skeel's anxiety in 1869 over trying to set a good example for underclassmen suggests that older and younger students had strong mentor-mentee relationships. Older students were most likely teaching younger students the systematic and democratic methods of collective action that Anne Southworth described in her diaries. Misbehaving at Vassar and Smith gave students the tools they would need to engage in feminist activism after graduation.

Marriage and Relationships

The women at Smith and Vassar often found that through their collective and individual rebellions the administrations could be moved to negotiate with students and allow them more independence. However, throughout the nineteenth century, the area that administration was most concerned with controlling was the students' interactions with men. Administrators clearly expressed their anxiety over keeping students properly respectable tespecially through monitoring and limiting their interactions with men. Students' diaries and letters show that allegations of inappropriate relationships, and even small flirtations, between students and men were considered the most serious offenses by administration. While the students wrote that other offenses such as staying up late and skipping exercise were most often punished with stern lectures, any forbidden relationships or interactions with men warranted major changes in the offending student's schedule, public humiliation, and even expulsion. Despite the efforts of administrators to keep their students away from seemingly inappropriate contact with men, administrators still expected their graduates to marry after leaving school. However, the nineteenth century graduates of these institutions married at lower rates and later in life than their non-college-educated counterparts. Students expressed mostly indifference or negativity towards marriage and the idea of romance with men in their letters and diaries. In contrast, the students did express a lot of interest in relationships with other women. Almost every diary quoted in this paper at least mentioned a romantic relationship between two women, especially at Vassar where so called "smashing" was an integral part of campus culture and an openly acknowledged phenomenon among faculty, students, and administration. Although members of the administration publicly expressed disapproval of these

relationships, school policies seemed to allow and even encourage them. Students, even if they did not partake in these relationships themselves, were very supportive of their classmates who did.

Students at Vassar in the nineteenth century often wrote about the lectures they received from the president in chapel in reaction to any rule breaking or inappropriate behavior from the student body. Some of these lectures involved reprimanding students for what administration perceived as inappropriate contact with men. Students often described these lectures as being the harshest in tone. Sarah L. Stilson wrote in her diary in 1865 that "Dr. Raymond in chapel gave a scathing philippic on girls flirting with young men at the lake."[58] Another student Mary Kiersted wrote about a similar lecture in her diary in 1871:

> The president has at last given us that lecture. He commenced, "Smoking, Drinking playing cards and carrying on clandestine correspondence with young men are common in 'Vassar College'" and then they caught it. He read the three girls names. Doris Eplis & Maltby he said they ought to be expelled but they would only put them on probation which was they are only allowed to go for exercise to the wall in front of the college and the brook back and shall be especially watched and not allowed to receive calls from gentlemen this year.[59]

Although the president lists smoking, drinking, and playing cards as part of their crimes, it is probably the relationships with young men that prompted this lecture and harsh punishment. The students' punishment involved banning them from receiving visits from men, limited their exercise to an area away from the college lake where Sarah Stilson wrote that students flirted with young men, and did not mention their other offenses at all. In other cases of rule breaking that did not involve romantic relationships with men, the

[58] The Diary of Sarah L. Stilson, 1865-1869, 28 November 1865, 16.
[59] The Diary of Mary Kiersted Pidgeon, 1871, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 2 May 1871, 85.

students did not mention such harsh punishments. However, according to Mary Kiersted's diary, committing an offense that involved "carrying out a clandestine correspondence with young men," warranted public humiliation in the form of calling out the names of the accused students in front of all their classmates and teachers as well as extra surveillance and limitations to their physical freedom on campus. The president even told his audience that these students deserved to be expelled, warning the other students that having a relationship with a man that administration deemed inappropriate could jeopardize their place at Vassar.

The administration's commitment to keeping students away from any perceived inappropriate contact with men is also evident in the Anne Southworth's diaries. In 1881 she wrote about another student's flirtation with a male porter working at the school. Southworth was scandalized by the episode and criticized her classmate Fannie harshly, writing, "One would have thought that she would have had more self respect that that."[60] She was also surprised that the porter George would risk engaging in this behavior and stated, "he must have been half-fool or he would never have acted so. But I think Fannie begun it. At any rate, George would never have acted so toward any other girl in College."[61] Southworth wrote that eventually Fannie began to wish for an end to this relationship, which seemed to consist primarily of George throwing notes through her window, as "She was afraid the teachers would find it out as she began to realize from what the girls said to her that it was rather a disgraceful matter, a flirtation with a porter."[62] The Lady Principal Mrs. Ray did find out about the relationship and launched an investigation that involved

[60] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1880-1882, 7 May 1881, 183.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid. 184.

questioning Southworth about Fannie and her family background. The investigation ended with George being fired for the relationship.[63] From Southworth's diary, it seems that George's only offense was passing notes to a student. However, even this small flirtation was worth an investigation from the Lady Principal and caused George to lose his job. Although the administration's reaction to the flirtation was probably exacerbated by the difference in class between Fannie and George, the episode shows how concerned the administration was with cracking down on these relationships.

If shielding the students from any appearance of inappropriate contact with men was the administration's primary concern in keeping the school's reputation as a place for reputable women, their worst fears must have been realized in 1879 when, according to Anne Southworth's diary, a student suddenly eloped with her beau in Poughkeepsie:

> Last week we were astonished by the announcement that Miss McDonald was married. Her father gave the college the McDonald scholarship fund and made his daughter come here. She hated to come. Had been here three years before and was now a Soph. She was married in the parlor of the Nelson House to a Freshman in Columbia College by name of Spence. She staid here several days after she was married, and packed her trunks, pretending that she was going to New York. She has gone somewhere now. Some say that she is expelled. But, at least, she has not been publicly expelled. They say that the fellow's father sent him back to College. Miss Smith, Miss McD's roommate, has gone home - expelled they say. She witnessed the wedding and probably assisted Miss McD. in some other ways.[64]

Southworth wrote in a later entry that the families of McDonald and her husband reconciled after their fathers went into business together and perhaps the families would not have minded the marriage in the first place "if they hadn't taken that way to do it and if the fellow had not been so young, only 18."[65] Not only did Vassar expel Southworth's classmate Miss McDonald for getting married against the wishes of her family, but her

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[63] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1880-1882, 7 May 1881, 185.
[64] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1878-1880, 23 February 1879, 135.
[65] Ibid., 16 March 1879, 144.

roommate Miss Smith was also expelled for acting as a witness for the marriage and assisting the elopement. The Nelson House that Southworth mentioned as the site of marriage was a hotel in Poughkeepsie, meaning that it would have been a major scandal for the school as the daughter of a major donor to the school got married against the wishes of her parents under the nose of the administration.

Although the Vassar administration saw what Anne Southworth called "The MacDonald Affair" as on offense worthy of expulsion, school officials and many teachers often made it clear to students at Smith and Vassar that they expected them to get married eventually. Anne Southworth wrote in her diary in 1881 about a lecture at Vassar that centered on marriage from Professor Backus whom she described as a very well liked faculty member among the student body. Southworth wrote that he told students that in a group of women it was likely that the large majority would marry since "Anyone who was not wholly selfish, didn't feel a constant desire to be alone, didn't take offense at the slight things and then feel incapable to forgive, was eligible to marriage."[66] He talked to the students about "the business side of marriage," warning them that "Marriage is a business contract, and no business man would enter any contract without mature deliberation. This too is a contract that can be broken only by death without bringing infamy upon one or both!"[67] He also advised them on which qualities they should look for in a potential husband. He recommended, "A woman should look out that the man was her superior. He need not necessarily know as much Latin and Greek as she did but he ought to be at least her equal in brain power."[68]

[66] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1880-1882, 11 April 1881, 74-75.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

An 1894 letter from Gertrude Gane to her mother suggests that students at Smith College received similar messages from faculty on marriage. In response to her mother attending a lecture about "how to train your children for marriage" she wrote that she was taking a similar class at Smith that her professor called "Family." So far the class consisted of lectures on "the development of marriage, what influences it, our attitude towards it etc, in pretty full particulars." She wrote that she liked the class although some students felt her professor was "too radical and outspoken."[69] Gane is unclear about what opinions some students found radical, but since she said the course was "something of the kind" of the lecture her mother heard on training children for marriage, they probably did not deviate too far from the assumption that Smith students, as respectable young women, would eventually marry. Gane and Southworth both received advice from faculty about marriage that assumed that they and the vast majority of their classmates would go on to marry.

A substantial minority within the first few generations of women to attend college remained single throughout their lives. Students who did marry often married later in life than women without a college degree.[70] Women who graduated from Vassar from 1872 to 1901 had a marriage rate hovering around 55%, with similar figures from other Seven Sisters colleges.[71] Because of college women's tendency to marry later than their peers, early statistics about marriage rates showed the majority of graduates did not marry and that those who did had fewer children.[72] These numbers supported contemporary ideas that equated native-born white women's decreasing fertility and marriage rates with women's higher education. By the end of the century it also helped fuel public panic over

[69] Gertrude Gane to mother, Unknown day January 1894.
[70] Solomon, *In the Company of Education Women,* 119.
[71] Ibid., 120.
[72] Ibid., 121.

"race suicide," the fear that educated women's tendency to marry later and have fewer children would cause the white race to die out and be replaced by the children of immigrants.[73]

Despite growing fears of race suicide outside the school, the students at Vassar expressed mostly ambivalence towards marriage in their diaries and prioritized their education over the idea of marriage and children. Frances Bromley wrote about a "severe talk on the married state" that she had with her roommates in 1877. She recorded the conversation in the two different diaries she kept in 1877. According to Bromley, the participants in the conversation all had a somewhat negative view of marriage. Her friend Laura thought, "The right ones get joined – not often to be sure – but now & then."[74]. In her other diary Bromley reported that Laura said there were some happy marriages, "not many, perhaps, but a few."[75] However, her other roommate Huldah "sets her foot down - 'None whatever.'"[76] The most positive view of marriage that Bromley and her friends could express was that occasionally a couple would be matched well. However, most often, or in all cases according to Huldah, marriage was an unhappy failure.

Christine Ladd, a student at Vassar from 1866 to 1869, also expressed a negative view of marriage, often within the frame of women's rights, in her diaries before and during her time at Vassar. For example, in 1863 while attending a preparatory school in Massachusetts she complained about her classmates' fixation on romance. She wrote, "they think so much here of 'beaus.' Is it, then, all that a woman lives for, to be married? Has she

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[73] Solomon, *In the Company of Education Women,* 119.
[74] The Diary of Frances M. Bromley, 1877, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 14 January 1877, 42.
[75] The Diary of Frances M. Bromley, 1870-1877, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 14 January 1877, 147.
[76] The Diary of Frances M. Bromley, 1877, 14 January 1877, 42.

no higher sphere than merely to entertain the other sex? I know not."[77] Ladd also clearly prioritized her education over the idea of getting married. In the diary she kept from 1860 to 1866 Ladd often wrote about her dream of getting a college education, and after she read about the plans to open Vassar College, she wanted to enroll. However, Ladd's father did not have the financial means to send her to Vassar so she also needed the support of her aunt and grandmother. In July of 1866, just months before she was to start her education at Vassar, she wrote that her grandmother was hesitating to help her because she worried that in four years Ladd, at age twenty-three, would be too old to get married. Ladd wrote that she told her grandmother that while "it would afford me great pleasure to entangle a husband," there was little chance of that happening since there was no one who wanted her as a wife and no one she wanted as a husband.[78] Ladd wrote that she "gave her the statistics of the great excess of mates in New England and proved that as I was decidedly not handsome my chances were very small." Ladd argued that since she would not find a husband to support her, then she needed an education so she could support herself. Surprisingly Ladd wrote that "Grandma surrendered" and she started her education at Vassar a few months later.[79]

Vassar and Smith both provided their students with some opportunities to interact with young men in a supervised setting. Vassar students sometimes mentioned visits from college men on campus and excursions to nearby West Point where they interacted with the male cadets. Smith students seemed to have more opportunities as they often mentioned class and group trips to nearby Amherst College, a men's college at the time. However, many

[77] The Diary of Christine Ladd-Franklin, 1860-1866, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 10 May 1863, 243.
[78] The Diary of Christine Ladd-Franklin, 1860-66, 23 July 1866, 57.
[79] Ibid.

students expressed a lack of interest in these opportunities to meet potential husbands. Mary Reed, a student at Vassar, wrote in her diary in 1893 about a school reception for the class of '95 to meet men from Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania. However, Reed did not attend the event because she "thought it would probably be a bore."[80] In the same entry she wrote about a trip with a friend and both their mothers to West Point, where they met some of the cadets there. In 1895 she wrote about another trip to West Point with the rest of her classmates. Reed wrote, "the Cadets are very handsome, but I think I never could get 'Cadet Fever' – there seems to me nothing so unusually attractive about it all."[81] Although Reed has some opportunities to meet eligible young men at Vassar, she and most other Vassar students did not seem too concerned with marriage prospects.

Gertrude Gane, a student at Smith during the same years Mary Reed was at Vassar, expressed a similar indifference in her letters to her family. Gane often wrote about traveling to Amherst College with other Smith students to visit her brother, a student at the school. She had to ask permission from President Seelye to go on these trips, but clearly she was still able to meet young college men regularly because of the proximity of Amherst and her brother's presence at the college.[82] Gane also wrote in 1893 about a trip her Smith Geology class took to study minerals at the Amherst campus. She wrote, "I didn't want to go a bit for I didn't care to meet all those Amherst men who were invited too."[83] Although Gertrude Gane and Mary Reed were pursuing college degrees in the last decade of the nineteenth century when fear over race suicide was at its height, neither expressed any

[80] The Diary of Mary Reed Earl, 1891-1895, November 1893, 40.
[81] Ibid., May 1895, 74.
[82] Gertrude Gane to father, 28 September 1890.
[83] Gertrude Gane to mother 12 November 1893.

feeling of being pressured to get married and have children. Both women were largely indifferent towards opportunities to meet college men.

There were, of course, some Vassar and Smith students concerned with marriage while in school and soon after graduation. Lilla Thomas reflected on her education at Vassar in a diary entry from 1873. She wrote that while she believed her education had improved her life and did not regret going to Vassar, if it were not for her education "I would be subjected to less unhappiness at home and would perhaps be engaged to somebody who has given me a true, honest love." She wrote that she could not return the feelings of the one suitor she did have because his education was so inferior to her own.[84] This complaint echoes the lecture that Anne Southworth described in her diary, in which Professor Backus told students their husband's intellectual abilities and achievements should roughly equal their own. Trying to find a husband with academic credentials similar to those of a Vassar College graduate in the nineteenth century would have been challenging for girls like Lilla Thomas who returned home to their small towns. This reluctance to marry a man with inferior intellectual skills may have dissuaded many college women from marrying.

While administrators sought to root out any kind of student contact with young men that could be considered inappropriate, and students expressed a relative lack of interest in their opportunities to meet eligible suitors, intense relationships between women were an integral part of campus life, especially at Vassar. Various Vassar faculty members made comments disapproving of these romantic relationships. For example, the famous astronomy professor Maria Mitchell told Alice Stone Blackwell that smashing was "a pest"

[84] The Diary of Lila Thomas Elder, 1866 -1873, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 31 October 1873, 46.

that distracted students from their studies.[85] However, there was virtually no evidence of punishing the behavior at Vassar after the death of Lady President Hannah Lyman in 187x, especially when compared to the harsh punishments given to students for relationships with men. In fact, school policies often seemed to encourage these relationships. Almost every diary from Vassar used in this paper at least mentions so called "smashing," with some students detailing their own strong feels towards teachers and classmates. Based on these diary accounts, it seems that the vast majority of students were not only non-judgmental of their peers who engaged in these relationships, but also actively helped classmates pursue these relationships.

Smashing was a well-documented phenomenon at Vassar College in which women engaged in intense romantic relationships with each other. A student was said to be "smashed" on another girl when she developed romantic feelings. Faculty and administration knew about smashing. In her first years as Lady Principal, Hannah Lyman attempted to reassign rooms when roommates that became too close. She also lectured students against public displays of affection, including kissing.[86] President John H. Raymond, who served as president of Vassar from 1864 to 1878 during the school's early years, also did not approve of smashing. Although he was reluctant to speak about the issue publicly, he tried to convince the school trustees to fund the construction of additional dormitories as the increasing student population forced more women to share rooms. The architecture of the Vassar dormitories that allowed students to evade the corridor teachers and bend rules, also gave them the privacy to engage in smashing.[87]

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[85] Horowitz, *Alma Mater,* 65.
[86] Ibid,. 66.
[87] Ibid.

Student sdiaries illuminate the culture of smashing at Vassar in the nineteenth century. Abby Rankin devoted a substantial amount of the diary she kept during her first year of college to her strong feelings for her moral philosophy teacher Lepha N. Clarke, the same Miss Clarke who was Christine Ladd's corridor teacher in 1866. Rankin first mentioned Miss Clarke in her December 10, 1871 entry, and following this date there are few entries that do not talk about her in the same sentimental tone.

> In one week and 3 days I shall be home, if nothing happens to prevent, I am so glad and yet there is one, whom I am sorry to leave, Dear Dear Mifs [Miss] Clarke, I love her so much, I never loved a lady outside of my relatives, as much as I do her, I would be so happy if she would only love me a little I want to go and see her ever so much and yet I am afraid she would not like it, when I see her talking with girls with their arms in her's [sic] I do feel so badly, not that [I] don't want her to love them, but I want her to love me to [too], But I am going to learn my lessons just as well as I can, and perhaps she will like me by and by. She has twice said "very good" when I have recited and I was so glad, last Sunday evening she met me going to chapel and sad [said] "have you passed a pleasant sabath" I did feel so happy that she should speak to me, perhaps this is foolish, but I don't think it is. Emma Clark says that I am "smashed" I ain't, but I do love and admire her as a teacher and if I only could, as a friend.[88]

Although Rankin brushed off her friend's accusation of being smashed, her declarations of love and expressions of jealousy only escalated as the school year progressed. She wrote about visiting Miss Clarke in her rooms and often talked about how she wanted to be alone with Miss Clarke and was jealous of her classmates who also spent time with her.[89] Although Rankin felt guilty about her jealousy, she never expressed any guilt over feeling same-sex desire, which was typical of smashing culture. When she found out that Miss Clarke was not returning to Vassar the next year, she mourned how her "longings and prayers have been in vain" because Miss Clarke does not love her. She compared herself to

[88] The Diary of Abby Rankin Holden, 1871-1872, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 10 December 1871, 25-26.
[89] Ibid., 14 January 1872, 33.

her classmates and wrote, “why should she love me when there are so many beautiful and smart girls who are so much more worthy to be loved than I, and yet I don't believe one of them loves her more than I do. She has been a dear friend to me any way, and I think she may love me a little.”[90] Rankin also wrote about her love for her childhood friend Ned Holden in her diary, although far less than she wrote about Miss Clarke. While Ned was a man and a suitable candidate for marriage, her love for Ned seemed to have had no effect on her smashing experience at Vassar.

Frances Bromley’s diaries during her time at Vassar also provide an example of smashing, but between students. Compared to Abby Rankin, Bromley’s writing is far less direct and dramatic but she clearly had an intense friendship with a classmate named Laura. Based on her diary, Bromley seems to have spent most of her free time with Laura, reading to each other, exercising, studying, and attending different school events. The passages about Laura in Bromley’s diary tend to be poetic and romantic in tone. In one entry Bromley wrote, “Laura gives me pieces of herself from sweet hidden places somewhere. Let's me lie still and says funny little poems to me.”[91] Similarly, in another entry about reading with Laura she wrote, “Some people are put together beautifully. A superb plan enters somehow into the construction of their souls.”[92] Even after Bromley’s poor health forced her to leave the school in 1877, she wrote about her happiness over receiving flowers and letters from Laura who remained at Vassar.[93] Bromley and Rankin’s accounts exemplify how smashing culture at Vassar involved intense and sometimes unrequited feelings, little or no shame about same-sex desire, and open displays of closeness.

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[90] The Diary of Abby Rankin Holden, 1871-1872, 16 June 1872, 43-44.
[91] The Diary of Frances M. Bromley, 1876-1877, 10 October 1876. 15.
[92] Ibid., 19 November 1876, 36.
[93] The Diary of Frances M. Bromley, 1877, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 7 March 1877, 96.

Although school officials like Hannah Lyman denounced smashing, school policies and traditions appear to have encouraged these relationships. It seems to have been very rarely punished as neither Frances Bromley, Abby Rankin, nor any other student mentioned any kind of punishment or signs of disapproval from the administration for expressing their feelings fairly openly. Vassar also held school-sponsored dances in which students brought their classmates as dates. Mary Sheldon described one of these dances in a letter to her mother in 1884. At the Sophomore Party she attended, sophomores invited freshmen to be their dates via written invitations. Sheldon went to the dance with a classmate who sent her flowers to wear beforehand. She also wrote that most of the faculty attended the party as well as the president who joined in on the last dance.[94] The faculty and administration were supportive of this practice that would have been obviously linked to smashing. Another Vassar student, Nettie Brand, also wrote about a school tradition that was related to smashing in a letter to her mother in 1893. On Valentines Day "a number of the girls wrote valentines and sent them to each other …The senior who had the most valentines received a prize."[95] Students also decorated their tables for dinner that night. Both of these accounts show that members of the administration were not concerned with cracking down on circumstances that encouraged smashing although they knew these relationships were taking place. The faculty and administration encouraged school traditions and events that could foster or be linked to smashing. School officials may have believed that these romantic relationships between women were less threatening to the school's reputation than accusations of improper relationships between students and men.

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[94] Mary Sheldon Stephenson to mother, 16 November 1884, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.

[95] Nettie Brand DeWitt to mother, 16 February 1893, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.

Although there is far less evidence of smashing culture at Smith College, students still participated in similar school-sponsored events that could be linked to smashing. Gertrude Gane wrote in 1890 in a letter to her family about the Smith Sophomore Reception in which "the freshman are all taken by sophomores." She went with another student who sent her flowers and she described the event as a "pleasant evening."[96] In another letter in 1894 she wrote about her experience taking a male Amherst student to the Smith junior prom. According to Gane, it was the only dance during the school year where students invited men.[97] Gane's experience shows that Smith school officials encouraged some of the same kind of smashing-linked events and traditions that were encouraged at Vassar.

Students who did not engage in smashing behavior at Vassar still supported and encouraged their classmates who did have these relationships. Anne Southworth's diaries show how students never judged their smashed classmates and even helped smashed students have relationships. Southworth mentioned smashing in 1880 upon her return to Vassar after summer vacation when she commented that her friend Miss Withy "could not be separated from her smash Miss Stockwell."[98] She also wrote about accidently witnessing an intimate scene between two students in 1879. She and her friend were knocking on the windows of their classmates one night to find people to walk outside with them when they "looked in at Miss Booth's window and saw a very affecting tableau - Hattie sitting in Miss Akens lap. We ran around the garden and sat in one of the arbors a while. Saw two strolling figures and ran from tree to tree across the lawn, stealthily dodging them. It was great

[96] Gertrude Gane to family, 2 November 1890.
[97] Gertrude Gane to father, 13 May 1894.
[98] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1880-1882, 19 September 1880, 6.

fun."[99] In both entries Southworth is not judgmental of her peers and does not appear to see either case of smashing as out of the ordinary. Southworth also wrote about an episode in 1882 in which students helped with a smash. Her friend Miss Glenn was sent an anonymous letter that said the sender "had long admired Miss G at a distance, etc. and asked that she would please wear a blue ribbon at her neck if her admiration was not distasteful."[100] In reaction to the letter, the entire senior class wore blue ribbons to dinner that night except for Miss Glenn who wore a blue dress she borrowed from a classmate. They planned to serenade the letter writer with a song and give her a bouquet of paper flowers but had to cancel since they were mistaken about the writer's identity.[101] Far from being judgmental of the letter writer, the entire senior class was willing to help unite her with the student she admired.

Although public figures like the feminist Alice Stone Blackwell feared that seclusion from men caused romantic relationships between women as they turned their passion towards each other, there are several examples that show many women who had relationships with other women while in college were engaging in similar behavior before and after college in settings where they were not secluded from men.[102] While living with an aunt and attending an all-girls school in Portsmouth, New Hampshire as a young teenager in the early 1860s, Christine Ladd wrote about her intense feelings for one of her teachers, Sarah Tompson. Her expressions of love, jealousy, and devotion in her diary closely mirror Abby Rankin's Vassar diary entries about Miss Clarke. Ladd referred to Miss

[99] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1878-1880, 4 April 1879, 159.
[100] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1880-1882, 3 February 1882, 254-255.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Horowitz, *Alma Mater,* 65.

Tompson as “mon amour” throughout her diary and in one entry she described her feelings towards this teacher.

> Tonight I may speak of love. I think that amativeness must be largely developed in me, & I must endeavor to restrain it somewhat by the exercise of reason. My love appears to be selfish rather than self-sacrificing. I suppose I love because I cannot help it but I cannot be happy without some return. She whom I call "mon amour" does not in the least reciprocate my extreme affection for her & I often resolve that I will put away such foolishness but as well might I resolve to fly. She is fascinating, but withal so tantalizing. I have an idea (foolish perhaps but true) that she is not entirely displeased with my proficiency under her sweet tutelage, for I cannot help perceiving that I am somewhat less stupid than the others. But why should I mention this love before my own relatives! Can it be that it is greater? With a few obvious exceptions, I can answer in the affirmative.[103]

When Ladd left the school she wrote about the her sadness over leaving “mon amour” behind alongside her anxiety over moving in with a stepmother she hardly knew. Her descriptions of her feelings for Tompson during her time in New Hampshire show that students did not participate in smashing as a result of being secluded at Vassar and away from the home. Ladd engaged in this behavior before she attended Vassar and while living with a guardian.

Ladd later attended a prestigious coeducational preparatory school in Wilbraham, Massachusetts where she wrote about a relationship she had with another female student named Eva.

> I have been living by heart throbs. I have found that I have a capacity for loving and that I am capable of awakening love in others. Yes, I have declared my passion and my mistress loves me! Eva is my love. I slept with her one night. We remained awake many hours confessing our love. Ah! I cannot say how much I love her; better than any one in the world. She is beautiful. A skin fair as the foam of the sea whence she [illegible]. Eyelids that droop and flutter and triumph and then rest lovingly over the witching orbs beneath. She said in her deep earnest voice, I never loved any one as I love you, Kitty. Oh, can I believe it? Is it true that anyone can love me, homely wicked as I am? I have had my lady-lover before, but I worshipped at a distance, made happy by a smile, intoxicated by kind word dropped carelessly; but

[103] The Diary of Christine Ladd-Franklin, 1860-1866. 11 March 1863, 207.

> never have I had the exquisite joy of love returned. Now I know what is meant by the ecstasy of a kiss. Ah! why is it we have no words given us to express the things we feel so deeply? I believe it is no idle boast to say I would lay down my life without a murmur for my Eva. My capacity for happiness must have increased, for I never knew such joy before.[104]

Ladd continued to mention her relationship with Eva until a few months after graduating from the preparatory school. She most likely also had a similar relationship while at Vassar as she mentioned a student named Carrie Davis in the shorter volume she kept while in college as "the mistress of her affections" that "has inspired me with a passion that reminds me of the days when this tough old heart of mine was young and tender."[105] The fact that Ladd was attending school with boys her age when she had an intense relationship with another girl suggests that seclusion in a women's college did not cause students to engage in smashing culture, as was the contemporary fear. Students like Christine Ladd were already having relationships with other girls and then the school policies and the design of at Vassar allowed smashing culture to flourish.

Frances Bromley also provides an example of how students could carry on strong relationships with women after leaving Vassar. Following her departure from Vassar in 1877, Bromley kept a diary from 1880 to 1882 that is written entirely in the form of letters to her friend Edith. In 1882 she wrote about how "A strong high friendship with another woman is as incomprehensible to some people as heaven is."[106] According to Bromley, people that had an "ideal" marriage were especially reluctant to believe that this kind of relationship was a possibility. This was the case with "H.," a woman Bromley knew who felt she had experienced the ideal form of love and marriage and "that such a thing could even

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[104] The Diary of Christine Ladd-Franklin, 1860-1866, 7 February 1865, 349-350.
[105] The Diary of Christine Ladd-Franklin, 1866-1873, 3 October 1868, 25.
[106] The Diary of Frances M. Bromley, 1880-1882, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 28 September 1882. 28

be approached in the tenderness & love of another woman is something she neither believes nor comprehends."[107] Bromley's post-Vassar diary shows that she considered strong relationships between women to be comparable to a marriage between a man and woman as well as something that remained an important part of life after college. By putting aside relationships with men and focusing on relationships with women before and after college, women at Smith and Vassar carved a unique space for themselves that allowed for new romantic opportunities.

[107] The Diary of Frances M. Bromley, 1880-1882, 28 September 1882. 28.

Health

Throughout the late nineteenth century, new pseudoscientific theories promoted by male figures in academia like Edward Clarke, popularized the notion that women's bodies were biologically incapable of remaining healthy while pursuing the course of study provided by Smith and Vassar. The diaries and letters of students at these schools reflected this preoccupation with women's health, as students were concerned with proving that women in higher education could live healthy lives. The serious health concerns, contagious outbreaks, and students who became seriously ill at these schools caused significant anxiety among students, family members, and school officials. Students' family members and administrators worried constantly about students' health, even to the point of asking students to pursue a less rigorous course of study in order to protect their health. The students often wrote about how much weight they had gained as a way to express their good health. Students also worked to improve their health through intense physical exercise. Students dedicated a significant amount of space in their diaries and letters to recording their daily exercise, which often consisted of long walks around the school grounds. Gymnastics classes and school sports also became integral parts of student life at both schools.

Arguments about women's biology and the scientific differences between the sexes greatly influenced public opinion regarding higher education for women in the nineteenth century. The writing of British cosmic philosopher Herbert Spencer that was published in the widely read periodical *Popular Science Monthly* circulated to educated Americans the idea that there were biological and scientifically provable differences between men and

women.[108] Spencer was part of a group of scientists that combined science and philosophy to argue that all of human history was a single continuum wherein the evolutionary process led up to its highest creation, human man – not human woman.[109] Spencer drew on Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's theory of inheritance of acquired characteristics to claim that men and women evolved separately. Spencer claimed that dominant traits were passed down to descendants of the same sex. Therefore, human woman, by passing useful traits from mother to daughter adapted to survive and reproduce successfully in a different way than men.[110] He argued that this form of evolution caused women to mature earlier than men in a way that made their brains physically smaller and arrested their mental development before they could acquire full intellectual capabilities and a higher sense of abstract reasoning and justice.[111] Although Spencer's views suggest women's natures were incompatible with higher education, Spencer made positive statements about women's education as he believed that it could help close the gap between men and women's abilities. Encouraging "the higher culture of women" through education was beneficial as long as it was limited enough to not "unduly tax" women's bodies and their reproduction abilities were protected and prioritized.[112] While Spencer made statements in support of women's education, many of his followers did not share this particular belief. However, like Spencer they continued to use scientific language and anatomy to argue against expanding women's education throughout the nineteenth century.

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[108] Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, "The Body in the Library," in *The "Woman Question" and Higher Education: Perspectives on Gender and Knowledge Production in America*, ed. Ann Mari May (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2009).12.
[109] Ibid., 14.
[110] Ibid., 13.
[111] Ibid.,14
[112] Ibid.

Dr. Edward Clarke was one of these scientists influenced by Spencer's work on evolution and women's anatomy that used similar pseudoscience to argue against women's participation in higher education in the late nineteenth century. In the latter half of the century it was increasingly impossible for those in the educated middle class to be in favor female ignorance and argue women should be illiterate and denied basic education.[113] However, pseudoscientists like Dr. Edward H. Clarke, a physician at Harvard University's medical school, pushed back against the post Civil War increase of women in higher education. Clarke published his highly influential book *Sex in Education; Or a Fair Chance for Girls* in 1873 two years before the establishment of Smith College. The book argued that the issue of whether or not women should receive elite educations on par with men could not be solved by ethics or philosophy but was a physiological issue, with an unbiased, anatomically based answer. Following the pre-Civil War tradition of advice books on physiological reform written for middle class parents worried about their children's health, Clarke addressed hysteria, the newest concern of these parents whose daughters were the most likely pursue college degrees.[114]

Hysteria was a catchall term for a variety of physical and mental health symptoms that was overwhelmingly diagnosed to women in nineteenth century America.[115] Clarke claimed that compared to women in Europe, American women were ugly, underdeveloped, and plagued with severe health issues like hysteria.[116] Clarke argued that while a girl was capable of going to school and studying in the same manner as a young boy, "it is not true that she can do all this, and retain uninjured health and a future secure from neuralgia,

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[113] Horowitz. "The Body in the Library," 16.
[114] Ibid., 17.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Edward H. Clarke, *Sex in Education; Or a Fair Chance for Girls* (Boston: J.R. Osgood, 1873). 21.

uterine disease, hysteria, and other derangements of the nervous system, if she follows the same method that boys are trained in."[117] He insisted that while boys and girls had the same health needs, during puberty girls went through a dangerous transition in which they must establish and maintain a regular menstrual cycle. If they failed, they would never fully recover and possibly suffer from infertility and hysteria-like symptoms for the rest of their lives.[118] Clarke used the old and false idea that the body had a limited amount of energy for which bodily functions competed to insist that a significant amount of rest, not provided by the contemporary models of women's educations, was the key to establishing regular menstruation cycles.[119] Clarke warned that if pubescent girls and their parents ignored this supposedly unbiased and factual advice, American women's health would continue to fail as it had for the past three generations and "The wives who are to be mothers in our republic must be drawn from transatlantic homes. The sons of the New World will have to react on a magnificent scale, the old story of unwived Rome and the Sabines."[120] Girls were capable of graduating from elite universities but as a result they would be defying female nature, causing irreparable damage to their health, and creating a national disaster with their underdeveloped reproductive system.

Clarke claimed that women who studied like men developed symptoms such as ugliness, underdevelopment of feminine physical traits, development of masculine physical features, and a variety of diseases and mental health problems connected to hysteria. Clarke supported his argument with a series of case studies that he claimed to have witnessed. The examples Clarke uses all follow a similar narrative in which a young woman attends a

[117] Clarke, *Sex in Education,* 17-18.
[118] Ibid, 38.
[119] Ibid, 40.
[120] Ibid, 27,63.

prestigious school and seemingly becomes sick and exhausted as a result. In one of these case studies he uses the example of a Vassar student who he claims attended classes, completed schoolwork, and exercised like a male student, then became severely sick and underdeveloped.[121] Although the student appeared to be in good health while at Vassar, Clarke claimed that after graduating "she became pale, hysterical, nervous in the ordinary sense, and almost constantly complained of a headache." Her health continued to decline until Clarke determined that "she probably never will become physically what she would have been had her education been physiologically guided."[122] Proponents of women's higher education such as Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi worked to disprove Clarke's harmful and scientifically false ideas by showing that hysteria was not linked to intellectual attainment, Clarke's assumptions about menstruation and bodily energy were wrong, and Clarke drew on too few case studies to make any scientifically sound conclusions.[123] However, these arguments were muted and Clarke's ideas, supported by Herbert Spencer's influence, remained the reigning paradigm throughout the late nineteenth century.[124] Students, administrators, and faculty at Smith and Vassar had to contend with the popular idea that the institution they belonged to was inherently harmful to the health of those it served.

The threat of poor health was not an abstract concept to women at Smith and Vassar. Serious health problems did occur among students, and most of the women mentioned in this paper wrote about at least one classmate who had to leave school because of poor health. Frances Bromley attended Vassar from 1876 until February of 1877 when she had to leave the school and travel to Albany for treatment of a serious chronic illness.[125]

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[121] Clarke, *Sex in Education,* 80.
[122] Ibid., 82.
[123] Horowitz. "The Body in the Library," 23-25.
[124] Ibid., 26.
[125] The Diary of Frances M. Bromley, 1877, 12 February 1877, 73.

Bromley wrote about her suffering from poor health throughout the volumes she kept at Vassar. Because of her health she was never able to return to finish her college education and she died in 1882 after a long struggle with her illness.[126] Ellen Skeel, another Vassar student, also wrote in her diary about her struggle with typhoid fever that forced her to stay home from Vassar for a year and graduate a year later than she intended. According to Skeel's diary there was an outbreak of typhoid fever at Vassar from 1868 to 1869 that affected a significant number of students. Skeel described a visit from a fellow classmate who reported to Skeel that the president of the school "announced one morning in chapel how many were sick, how many had the typhoid, and how many were dangerously ill."[127] The friend told Skeel that the president had to give students an update on the health crisis because "there was such a feeling of gloom pervading the College that it was necessary for the girls to know truly the state of the case."[128] Administration ordered some students who contracted typhoid to wait a year before returning to school. Skeel wrote that this included one student named Fanny Hoyt, who was told by the president that "her mind shattered by so long an illness could better grapple the higher sciences after one year's repose."[129] Administrators later told Skeel that she would also have to spend a year at home recovering. She often wrote about her sadness over being forced to graduate a year later than her class, and almost equally upsetting for Skeel was the tragedy of losing all her hair as a result of her illness.[130]

Popular ideas about women's health and higher education, compounded by cases of

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[126] *An Historical Sketch of the State Normal College at Albany, New York and a History of Its Graduates for Fifty Years, 1844-1894* (Albany, NY: Brandow Printing Company, 1894).
[127] The Diary of Ellen Skeel Adee, 1869-1870, 4 January 1869, 11.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid., 12 February 1869, 23.

extreme illness like those detailed in Bromley and Skeel's diaries, clearly worried many parents and administrators enough for them to encourage students to study less in order to save their health. Anne Southworth wrote in 1878 that her brother Harry sent her a letter with advice on starting her college years at Vassar. He advised her to "be careful and don't injure yourself trying to be the best scholar in your class; better be moderate in your ambition and you will do better in a long run."[131] Christine Ladd's father also gave her similar advice in 1863 while she attended an elite preparatory school a few years before entering Vassar. She reported that he wrote to her in a letter that it would be to her advantage to stay at the school longer and she "had better not graduate next term, not take too many studies and be careful not to injure my health."[132] Students occasionally wrote that school officials also encouraged them to prioritize their health over academics. Esther Brooks, a student at Smith College, wrote to her mother in 1879 about her younger sister Frona Brooks who also attended Smith. Esther Brooks wrote that Frona had been waking up at 5:00 a.m. every morning to study; however, she stopped because the president gave a lecture to the students saying that kind of behavior was "suicidal."[133] Anne Southworth also wrote that the student-elected valedictorian in 1881 declined the position because she had poor health.[134] These incidents show that women at Smith and Vassar were careful to make sure their health would not be compromised by their rigorous academics.

In student writing, there was a fixation on weight as a way to demonstrate that one's health was improving at college. Weight loss was a symptom of illnesses commonly associated with women during the late nineteenth century such as neurasthenia, hysteria,

[131] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1878-1880, 26 September 1878, 18.
[132] The Diary of Christine Ladd-Franklin, 1860-1866, 23 December 1863, 289.
[133] Esther Brooks to mother, 4 October 1879, Student Letters Collection, Smith College Special Collections Archive, Northampton, Massachusetts.
[134] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1878-1880, 3 April 1881, 54.

and consumption.[135] Edward Clarke also mentioned weight loss in many of the case studies he used to argue that higher education was harmful to women's health.[136] As a result, white college women were eager to gain weight and showcase hearty appetites.[137] Students at Vassar periodically recorded their weight in their diaries and expressed their desire to grow heavier. Students at Smith and Vassar also wrote about their weight in letters to reassure their worried families that they were healthy. After contracting typhoid fever, Ellen Skeel often happily recorded her rising weight during her year at home recovering from the disease. In January of 1869 she and her sister Adelaide weighed themselves and found that they weighted 112 and 98 pounds respectively. She happily wrote that she was certainly "gaining in weight and also in strength.[138] Frances Bromley also wrote in 1876 that her classmates told her she was getting fatter and had a full face, but she was sure that her poor health and aching body proved that those things were not true.[139]

Students assured their parents in letters that they were healthy and gaining weight. Nettie Brand wrote in a letter to her mother in 1892 that she had neither gained nor lost any weight in her first three weeks at school although she imagined that her face had grown fuller. She assured her mother that she could not have expected to gain weight in such a short amount of time and told her that one student gained fifteen pounds in her first three months at Vassar even though "she is a girl who studies hard too."[140] This comment about a student gaining weight and being healthy despite studying hard reflects the popular idea that women who devoted too much energy to studying and the development of the brain

[135] Margaret A. Lowe, *Looking Good: College Women and Body Image, 1875-1930* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). 31.
[136] Clarke, *Sex in Education,* 85.
[137] Lowe. *Looking Good,* 31.
[138] The Diary of Ellen Skeel Adee, 1869-1870, 5 January 1869, 12.
[139] The Diary of Frances M. Bromley, 1876-1877, 1 November 1876, 27.
[140] Nettie Brand DeWitt to mother, undated Oct 1892.

would not have enough energy for other bodily functions. Esther Brooks often wrote home about how much she and her sister Frona weighed while they attended Smith. In one letter she wrote that a friend who heard that Brooks had lost weight warned her not to tell her mother or "she would be anxious."[141] This warning demonstrates how important weight was as a signifier of good health. Brooks' friend understood that parents would become worried if they learned their daughter was losing weight and thus had poor health. Brooks assured her mother that despite her previous weight loss, she found that she gained a pound when she was weighed a few days before.[142] These students used weight as a way to convince their families and themselves that they were in good health, despite popular wisdom that held it was nearly impossible for women to develop their brains and bodies at the same time.

Students used physical exercise at Smith and Vassar to counteract the idea that women's bodies were incompatible with higher education. Anne Southworth's experience at Vassar shows how students at the Seven Sisters may have used some of the ideas used to argue against their presence in higher education to justify their educations and prove their good health through exercise. In 1882 Southworth wrote in her diary that William Blaikie, a lawyer and Harvard graduate, gave a lecture to the Vassar student body in chapel "about how to care for the body and make it strong." A friend of Southworth bought his book *How to Get Strong and How to Stay So,* and the two of them decided to read the book and follow Blaikie's guidelines.[143] She wrote in later entries that the two girls were still following his exercise manual.

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[141] Esther Brooks to mother, 16 October 1878.
[142] Ibid.
[143] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1880-1882, 12 February 1882, 256.

How to Get Strong and How to Stay So was a popular advice book about exercise published in 1879. The book included a chapter devoted to arguments for why girls should exercise. Blaikie wrote that few girls in American cities and towns were "blooming, shapely, and strong" and instead most girls had flat chests, angular shoulders, scrawny necks, and other visible signifiers of weakness.[144] Blaikie's argument that American women were becoming increasingly weak mirrored the image painted by Edward Clarke. However, instead of advocating for more rest, Blaikie argued these deficiencies were a result of middle class and wealthy girls being deprived of the vigorous exercise that boys received. He criticized the education system for paying no attention to the physical development of girls alongside mental development and suggested that a physical exercise regimen consisting of weightlifting, walking, and running, would be beneficial for learning.[145] He specifically called on the presidents of Vassar and Wellesley to "introduce a system of physical education" that would first train the weakest students to a healthy strength and then implement daily exercise classes for the whole student body.[146]

Blaikie quotes Herbert Spencer at length in his argument about the importance of making time for exercise and development of physical strength in girls' schooling. The Spencer quote he drew on insisted that a woman's education would be of far less use to her than a well developed body, especially because physical weakness would repel potential marriage suitors. Mothers who were "anxious to make their daughters attractive could scarcely choose a course more fatal than this which sacrifices the body to the mind."[147] Because, according to Blaikie and Spencer, men cared little for intelligence in women

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[144] William Blaikie, *How to Get Strong and How to Stay So* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1879). 42.
[145] Ibid. 48-49.
[146] Ibid, 53.
[147] Blaikie, *How to Get Strong,* 54-55

compared to physical beauty, thus women's education should prioritize exercise. After all "How many conquests does the blue-stocking make through her extensive knowledge of history?"[148] Although these ideas seem to be at odds with the goals of Smith and Vassar students, few of whom showed an intense interest in getting married while in college, Anne Southworth and her friend were still interested in following Blaikie's advice on how to get stronger. While Herbert Spencer's pseudoscientific ideas and Edward Clarke's image of weak American women were routinely used to delegitimize their education, students like Anne Southworth used popular advice books that drew from these ideas in an effort to improve their health. Students routinely wrote about exercise as a major part of campus culture and a way to exhibit their good health.

All of the students mentioned in this paper routinely wrote about their exercise in their diaries and letters. Students listed how long they walked and with which classmates, what sports they played, and their activities in their gymnastics classes. Gertrude Gane's letters to her family during her time at Smith from 1890 to 1894 provide a good example of how students at Smith and Vassar used their exercise to maintain and demonstrate their health. Gane wrote about her gymnastics classes more than any other form of exercise. Smith required students to take indoor gymnastics classes during the winter and participate in outdoor sports in the spring and fall.[149] Vassar students also mentioned gymnastics as part of their exercise routines in their writing. Students were required to wear school sanctioned gym suits during these classes, which consisted of a loose fitting blouse, and either a skirt or bloomer like trousers.[150] Like other students, Gane wrote home

[148] Ibid. 55.
[149] Lowe, *Looking Good*, 47.
[150] Lowe. *Looking Good,* 48.

when she first arrived at Smith asking for ten dollars to buy the gym suit.[151] She later wrote that she enjoyed gym and "it is really the greatest circus you can imagine." She reported that she routinely went to the gymnastics building early so she could practice and was getting stronger as a result. Gane wrote, "When I first went I could not pull myself up to my chin, without jumping, but now I can pull myself up to my chest giving a steady pull."[152] In 1892 Gane began teaching a gymnastics class at the home culture center in Northampton to a group of "shop girls and clerks, and, in fact, any other girl who may wish to join."[153] This shows that young women outside of elite colleges and the middle class were interested in gymnastics, and college women like Gane were considered expert enough in exercise to teach it. She also wrote in later letters about how she tutored other Smith girls in gymnastics, which implies that gymnastics was very important to Smith students, as some were willing to pay a tutor.[154]

Gane also mentioned other forms of exercise she did with her classmates such as tennis, baseball, and long walks. These walks could be as intense as the hike she took with five other Smith students in May 1892. Gane cut class "without the least prick of conscience" and walked sixteen miles to a place called "Kid's Lookout" that she claimed was a 1400 foot mountain near Smith. She wrote, "We were the first College girls who ever *walked* to Kid's Lookout and we are looked upon as having done something wonderful."[155] Gane also described how important basketball was at Smith in an 1894 letter. She wrote that "the gym was packed with faculty, townspeople, and college girls each carrying their class colors" for the "very exciting contest" of basketball between the freshman and

[151] Gertrude Gane to family, 2 November 1890.
[152] Gertrude Gane to mother, 7 December 1890.
[153] Gertrude Gane to mother, 2 October 1892.
[154] Gertrude Gane to mother, Undated #7.
[155] Gertrude Gane to mother, 6 May 1892.

sophomore classes.[156] Not only were sports and exercise activities Smith students enjoyed in private, but they could also be an event that the people of Northampton attended. For Gertrude Gane and her classmates, physical strength was a source of pride and admiration. Instead of implementing the rest periods recommended by Dr. Clarke, students fixated on exercise as a way to build their physical strength and demonstrate their health.

Anne Southworth's experience at Vassar also demonstrates that the administration was very concerned with regulating student exercise. The 1877 Students' Manual states that students were expected to complete one hour of exercise daily except on Sundays when only half an hour was required. This exercise was supposed to take place outside in the open air with the exception of the students' regular exercise in the gymnasium.[157] At one corridor meeting in 1878 Southworth had to report that she was fifteen minutes short of the requirement.[158] A few days later she was summoned to the Lady Principal's office and lectured for missing that fifteen minutes of exercise during the rainy day. She wrote that in the future, she had to get permission from the school physician to miss exercise.[159] Anne Southworth also took gymnastics classes at Vassar. She wrote that there were three gym classes at Vassar, sorted according to strength. She asked to be placed in class for the strongest girls. The school physician "thought I did not look hardly strong enough for it, but let me go into it if I would promise to tell her if it was too hard for me."[160] The administration's incorporation of exercise into Vassar's long list of rules and regulations demonstrates how concerned schools were with physical health. Women at Vassar and Smith were not interested taking the rest thought necessary to develop their bodies.

[156] Gertrude Gane to mother 19 March 1894.
[157] The Scrapbook of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1878-1882, 114.
[158] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1878-80, 30 September 1878, 25.
[159] Ibid., 9 October 1878, 35.
[160] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1878-80, 15 November 1878, 15.

Instead, they created new and unique standards for good health that incorporated weight gain and rigorous exercise.

Aspirations Versus Realities

American women in the late nineteenth century had little opportunity for an advanced career. There were few obvious paths for women who graduated from prestigious colleges like Smith and Vassar outside of marriage and motherhood. The professions that women could most easily pursue were ones that were framed as a natural extension of their proper roles as caretakers and mothers in the domestic sphere. Careers in philanthropic organizations were popular with educated women, since charity work was seen as an extension of the domestic sphere where women could enjoy the company of other educated women, utilize their own elite educations, and make cultural improvements in their communities.[161] However, since the vast majority of this work was unpaid in the nineteenth century, charity work was not a viable career path for non-wealthy women. In the early nineteenth century, teaching became a major career option for women. As men left the teaching field for better-paying jobs, young women in the Northeast began to take these newly available jobs to meet communal and personal needs.[162] By the end of the century, women made up the majority of teachers at the elementary school level.[163] However, female teachers' salaries were usually around one-third of what their male counterparts earned and they rarely had opportunities to rise to positions like principal or superintendent within the school system.[164] Although women at Smith and Vassar were often encouraged to pursue teaching careers, in their letters and diaries students expressed indifference or antipathy towards the idea of teaching as a career. While many students did take teaching

[161] Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 123.
[162] Ibid., 33.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.

jobs for a period of time, many saw it as a way to temporarily earn money before attending graduate school or college and embarking on a better paying, more prestigious career.

Mary Reed's record of the speakers who came to Vassar during her time at the school from 1891 to 1895 shows how the school encouraged students to pursue charity work after graduation as a career. In 1892 she wrote that a bishop who did missionary work with Native Americans in South Dakota came to talk to the students.[165] She also wrote about a lecture on "the Missionary Spirit" as an essential part of Christianity given in 1893 by Robert Speer, the Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions.[166] She also described a visit from a Mrs. Ballington Booth who talked to the students about her work with the Salvation Army. Reed wrote, "the girls, and everyone are very enthusiastic about her … The work she is doing is simply wonderful… I consider it a great privilege to have shaken hands with her, and to have spoken a few words with her."[167] Reed also described a visit from the famous Jane Addams of Hull House in 1893. She wrote that Addams talked about her work and did not want to make the settlement house "seem like an institution" but an "opportunity for social intercourse."[168] The many lectures at Vassar from missionaries, settlement house officials, and charity workers show how the school encouraged its students to consider philanthropy as a vocation even though it was rarely paid.

Many women at Smith and Vassar either took teaching jobs or considered teaching after graduation; however, students also expressed reluctance to pursue or keep these low paying jobs where there were very few opportunities for promotions. Frances Bromley, who attended a normal school in Albany and worked as a schoolteacher for years before she

[165] The Diary of Mary Reed Earl, 1891-1895, October 1892. 16.
[166] Ibid., January 1893, 18.
[167] Ibid., November 1893, 41.
[168] Ibid., February 1893, 19.

began her education at Vassar, wrote about her frustration in 1874 when she was passed over for a promotion at the school where she worked:

> It is the old story – that is told and told to girls and women as the places they aspire to are struck from them and they learn at every bend that they contend with men – A college boy – because he is a boy – is preferred without experience or years – though she may have been far more worthy is passed by –Ah! Don't I know how it feels! A man as Mr. Sherman tells me "will give the school more of a name " and so it is before me and I need not be told that already the letter is on its way that recommends Mr. Hyde to the principalship of the Normal School – and I who have loved it so and worked for it so long am out of [illegible] – The whole of me says as I toss and turn – "I will not stay."[169]

Bromley's experience of being passed over for a promotion in favor of a less qualified male teacher would have been a common occurrence in the male-run public schools of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Men took up the vast majority of high-ranking positions in the education system such as principals and superintendents.[170] Women with college degrees or who planned to get college degrees would have been frustrated by the obvious injustice and motivated to leave the profession as Bromley was.

Many students at Smith and Vassar took teaching jobs to make money for college or graduate school but expressed reluctance in their writing to accept teaching as a long-term career. Some students worked temporary teaching jobs during their college careers. Esther Brooks began teaching Sunday school at Unitarian church in Northampton in 1879 while attending Smith.[171] Similarly, Ellen Skeel worked as a Sunday school teacher in her hometown beginning in 1869 while she recovered from typhoid fever away from Vassar for a year.[172] Some students also taught for short periods of time when they ran out of money to fund their college education. This was the case with Sarah L. Stilson who left Vassar in

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[169] The Diary of Frances M. Bromley, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 25 August 1874, 264.
[170] Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women,* 128.
[171] Esther Brooks to mother, 7 December 1879.
[172] The Diary of Ellen Skeel Adee, 1869-70, 23 April 1869, 48.

1868 to teach and earn money so she could return later that year.[173] Although many of these students expressed satisfaction with their teaching work while in college, most students did not see it as more than a temporary job.

With graduation approaching, Mary Reed discussed her future career options in her diary in 1895. She wrote that her main goal was to go to the Albany Library School and study to become a librarian with the two or three other students in the class of '95 who had the same goal. However, her father did not support her plan because he felt that it was too "confining." She acknowledged that teaching was another option but admitted she was not enthusiastic about teaching and feared she would not be a successful teacher.[174] Esther Brooks also wrote about her post graduation plans in her letters home. While her ultimate goal was to go to medical school, Brooks wrote to her mother in 1882 about possible jobs she could take after graduating from Smith to earn money. She asked her mother to find out if there was an opening at Boston University for a teaching position with a good salary, preferably to teach a course in early English and Anglo Saxon. However, she wrote that her main objective for a post-grad job was to make enough money to be independent from her father. If she could get a higher salary as a stenographer she would rather take that job than teach.[175] In a letter dated a few days later, she wrote that she did not want to teach unless it paid a high enough salary to make it "very much worth my while." Otherwise, she would have rather found a higher paying job as a stenographer or housekeeper.[176] Reed and Brooks' attitudes towards teaching exemplify how teaching as a profession was often seen as either a temporary way of earning money, easily replaced by a higher paying job, or as a

[173] The Diary of Sarah L. Stilson, 1865-1869, 1868, 21.
[174] The Diary of Mary Reed Earl, 1891-1895, April 1865, 61.
[175] Esther Brooks to mother, 22 January 1882.
[176] Esther Brooks to mother, 26 January 1882.

less desirable backup to a career that a student was more passionate about.

Student letters and diaries show that women at Smith and Vassar were interested in pursuing prestigious careers and advanced degrees even if those goals were far beyond what was considered an appropriate vocation for women. Susan Raymond's diary showcases the many career goals of her classmates at Vassar in a section where she recorded the entire Prophecy for the Class of 1871. Making class prophecies was an annual activity at Vassar wherein a student was elected to use a mixture of humor, poetry, and knowledge of her classmates to predict the future of each woman in her class. The prophecy recorded in Raymond's diary is attributed to Angie L. Sanford and includes information on the post graduation ambitions of many women from the class of 1871. While many of the predictions include jokes and forecasts about potential marriages and children, other predictions hint at the students' aspirations in music, medicine, academia, and politics. For example, Raymond wrote that Sanford predicted that a student named Hoskins would one day occupy "the chair of Ancient Languages" at a university and teach classes of with male and female students, since "in the year 1900, Colleges will be thrown open to both sexes, and each will strive with the other for the highest honors."[177] Sanford also imagined that another student would become a famous poet after publishing many successful books of her poetry.[178] The most ambitious prediction imagines a political future for one student Raymond calls "Smith M.E.L." Sanford wrote that she would soon be "advocating her candidate for the Presidency," eclipsing other contemporary female political figures such as Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone until Smith M.E.L. eventually became Secretary of State.[179]

[177] The Diary of Susan Raymond, 1864, Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library, Poughkeepsie, New York, 12 June 1869, 53.
[178] Ibid., 44.
[179] The Diary of Susan Raymond, 1864-18xx, 12 June 1869, 55.

Although the class prophecy was supposed to be a fun activity and not a serious declaration of student objectives, it does show that students at Vassar were envisioning a future in which they could pursue high-status and high-paying careers.

Closely examining the career goals and postgraduate lives of three students who attended Smith and Vassar colleges illustrates the larger trends in the lives of early graduates from these institutions, including a divide between their highly ambitious goals and the reality of educated women's lives in the early twentieth century. Out of three women who graduated from either Smith or Vassar in the late nineteenth century, Esther Brooks, Anne Southworth, and Christine Ladd, all three went on to pursue graduate degrees. Two of these women got married later in life than average and had two or fewer children. However, only one had a career following graduate school.

Anne Southworth attended Vassar College from 1878 to 1882. She often mentioned her ambition to become a lawyer in the diaries she kept while she was at school. Upon graduating in 1882, Southworth wrote that it was "fully decided that I am [to] study law at Boston University." She wrote that she might be able to get a teaching position where her brother worked that paid fifty dollars a month but neither she nor her father wanted her to teach. She wrote, "If I am going to study law I am going to begin now. Teaching school a year would be a sort of dissipation of forces… I don't think anyone has a right to teach as a means for and end. Teaching ought to occupy all one's mental energy."[180] She also wrote that her father did not expect her to actually practice law once she finished law school but saw her legal education as a way to attain writing and speaking skills so that she could "meet men upon their own ground." It seems that along with her father, other people in her

[180] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1880-1882, 23 June 1882, 320.

life did not expect her to actually practice law. She describes the "moderate approval" she got from professors and friends when she told them about her career plans. Southworth wrote that she received a warning that she would have to "fight all the way against the sentiment there is against women in the law."[181]

After gradating from Vassar Anne Southworth did study law at Boston University. It was there that she met her husband Henry A. Wyman, a law professor and trustee at the school.[182] The two married in 1891 when Southworth was twenty-nine years old, and she became Anne Wyman.[183] She gave birth to one child in 1900, a daughter named Mary Virginia Wyman. However, this daughter died of meningitis in 1903.[184] Anne Southworth does not appear to have pursued any kind of law career after graduating from Boston University and getting married. Her obituary lists only the various career achievements of her husband.[185] Southworth continued to live in the Boston area near where she grew up after graduating from Vassar. It appears that Southworth was a very wealthy, prominent woman in Boston. Her husband briefly served as the attorney general of Massachusetts in 1919, she split her time between a 400-acre estate in Middleboro and a home on Beacon Hill in Boston, and she was an avid tourist, traveling to Europe close to forty times during her life.[186] Her obituary in the Boston Globe calls her a "leader" in her town of Middleboro and says that she was "well-known for her local civic charities and financial assistance to small businessmen."[187] She also gave one of the principal addresses at Vassar's fiftieth

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[181] The Diary of Anne Southworth Wyman, 1880-1882, 23 June 1882, 320
[182] "Mrs. Henry A. Wyman," *Daily Boston Globe*, September 5, 1950.
[183] "Henry A. Wyman and Anne C. Southworth, 13 February 1891." Massachusetts Marriages 1841-1915, microfilm 1,651,231, Secretary of the Commonwealth, State Archives, Boston.
[184] "Mary V. Wyman 13 April 1903," Massachusetts Deaths 1841-1915, microfilm 2,057, 764, Secretary of the Commonwealth, State Archives, Boston.
[185] "Mrs. Henry A. Wyman." *Daily Boston Globe.*
[186] Ibid.
[187] "Mrs. Henry A. Wyman." *Daily Boston Globe.*

anniversary in 191x. Anne Wyman died in 1950 at the age of eighty-nine.[188]

Anne Southworth's biography reflects the larger pattern of women who attended law school in the late nineteenth century, but a had a difficult time pursuing a law career after graduation. Between 1870 and 1920 as law schools gradually replaced the apprentice system for lawyers, some women began to enter schools that admitted a few women. However, these women often did not go on to take? the bar exam and practice law.[189] Different states began allowing women to practice law at different times, but by 1920 when women could legally practice in every state, they only made up 1.4 percent of lawyers in the United States. Women who did practice law usually joined their husband or father's office instead of practicing independently.[190]

Esther Brooks attended Smith from 1878 to 1882, the same time Anne Southworth was at Vassar. In her letters to her mother, she often wrote about her ambition to go to medical school and become a physician. She asked her mother in a few letters for information on different medical schools such as in 1882 when she asked her mother for a copy of a circular or schedule from Harvard Medical School and any information on how "the scheme for opening it to women" was progressing.[191] Women like Brooks were knocking on the door of Dr. Clarke's own institution. Like Anne Southworth's father, it does not appear that her parents were very supportive of her goal to be a physician. When she briefly made plans to drop out of Smith in 1880 she wrote that she thought her mother would be happy since it would postpone her plans to enter medical school for at least two years. In the same letter she complained that her parents would not pay for her medical

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[188] Ibid.
[189] Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women, 131.*
[190] Ibid.
[191] Esther Brooks to mother, 22 January, 1882.

school tuition under the conditions she offered and she wrote, "I only thought that if you would be willing to put a son through a profession you would a daughter.[192] However, while at Smith Brooks met another student with the same ambition who also had parents who were opposed to the idea of their daughter going to medical school and believed that she would outgrow it. She wrote that it was a "great comfort" to talk to someone with the same goal she had, and the two resolved "that we shall do it some time in our life no matter how long it takes."[193]

Esther Brooks did go on to earn an M.D. from the University of Michigan Medical School. However, she was never able to practice medicine due to hearing loss. She lived with her sister Frona's family for most of her life and helped care for Frona and her husband Morgan Brooks' eight children. She died in 1942.[194] Esther Brooks was part of an increase in the number of female doctors at the end of the nineteenth century. By the 1870s efforts to create a place for women in medicine had produced visible results. Early pioneers like Elizabeth Blackwell and Mary Putnam Jacobi inspired young college-educated women to pursue medical school to gain power, independence, and respect. [195] From 1880 to 1910 the number of female doctors in the United States grew from less than 2,500 to over 9,000. However, this trend did not continue into the twentieth century as "irregular" homeopathic medicals schools that served a large number of women began to close in the 1890s, while at the same time newly opened regular medical schools like Michigan and Johns Hopkins admitted very few women.[196] Esther Brooks often wrote about homeopathic medicine in

[192] Esther Brooks to mother, 18 May 1880.
[193] Esther Brooks to mother, 6 November 1881.
[194] Swarthmore College, "The Brooks Family Papers," *Swarthmore.edu*, Accessed March 1, 2018, http://www.swarthmore.edu/library/friends/ead/5252brfa.xml#boxfolder4
[195] Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women, 131.*
[196] Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women, 131*

her letters, an area where female doctors thrived in the nineteenth century. She asked her mother for advice on home remedies and ingredients for homeopathic medicines.[197]

Christine Ladd, who attended Vassar from 1866 to 1869 during first few years it was open, was the only woman out of the three to have a high-profile career after graduate school. Although she did not articulate a solid career plan in her diaries, she often wrote about her dream of pursuing an advanced education and living independently from her father and any husband. She usually framed her hope for independence in feminist language. For example, in 1863 she wrote, "I feel that I am born for something higher & nobler than to be married off to the highest bidder in the market of husbands."[198] She also imagined a future in which she could stop relying on her financially turbulent family. As a result of her father's financial problems, she was forced to leave Vassar for a period of time to teach and earn money for tuition. Her frustration with these circumstances is reflected in her diary when she wrote in 1867, "I see before me a time when woman shall vote and have the consequent means of support, but at the present moment I know not how that support is to be obtained."[199]

Immediately after graduating from Vassar Ladd began teaching math and science in Pennsylvania as a way to earn money while devoting some of her time to private study. Christine Ladd was specially admitted to Johns Hopkins University in 1878 to study under the British mathematician James Joseph Sylvester even though the school was not officially accepting women to the university at the time.[200] While the trustees of the university

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[197] Esther Brooks to mother, 20 October 1878.
[198] The Diary of Christine Ladd, 1860-1866, 13 March 1863, 209.
[199] The Diary of Christine Ladd, 1866-1873, 24 February 1867,14.
[200] Vassar College, "Christine Ladd-Franklin," *Vassar Encyclopedia*, Accessed February 25, 2018, http://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/alumni/christine-ladd-franklin.html.

allowed her to attend lectures and earn the stipend (but not the title) of a fellow, they did not officially award her the doctorate she earned upon completing her degree requirements in 1882. Like Anne Southworth, Christine Ladd married one of her professors, a young mathematics professor named Fabian Franklin. They married in 1882 when Ladd was thirty-five years old and she became Christine Ladd-Franklin. The couple had two children, but only one daughter survived into adulthood.[201] Following her graduation from Johns Hopkins, she published her research and made significant contributions to the fields of mathematics, psychology, and logic, especially with her work on vision and human perception of color. Despite her extensive body of research and her growing reputation, she never attained a formal academic post from which to conduct her research.[202] In 1904 she became the first woman to teach in the Arts and Sciences faculty at Johns Hopkins; however she was only allowed to teach one course each term and her appointment was on a year-to-year basis. She began teaching at Columbia in 1910; however, again she was only allowed to teach one course at a time and was never given a salary or afforded faculty status.[203] Ladd-Franklin retained the same passion for women's rights that she exhibited in her diaries. During her lifetime she advocated for the advancement of women in academia as well as for the establishment of discussion groups on economics for women so they could become informed voters following the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.[204] She died in 1930 at the age of eighty-two.

[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.

Conclusion

Although women at Smith and Vassar in the nineteenth century experienced myriad anxieties, criticisms, and prejudices throughout their lives as educated women, they did not react to these fears from the public, popular thinkers, and family members as expected. Instead of conforming to the preexisting ideal of middle class white womanhood, these women created a new space at college where they could exert their independence and live out a new middle class ideal that allowed for different intellectual, romantic, and professional opportunities for women. While the schools' administrations attempted to use rules and regulations to replace the guardianship of students' parents with the guardianship of the administration, students were able to subvert this system of control that severely limited their independence through individual rebellions and collective action. These methods of protesting power systems, articulating their rights as young women, and taking collective action would allow them to carve out new social and political roles for women through participation in organized feminist activism in the following decades. Despite college administrators' attempts to protect the sexual purity of students, these women were successful in creating romantic opportunities outside the respectable confines of marriage. Students often had indifferent or negative views towards marriage and meeting eligible young men. However, romantic relationships between women became an important part of college life and continued outside of college. Students also reacted to health concerns over women in higher education in a way that created new standards of health for young college women. Instead of resting like thinkers such as Edward Clarke thought necessary, students proved they were healthy through gaining weight and adopting intense exercise regimens. Students also envisioned new professional opportunities outside

female-dominated professions like teaching and charity work. Even though there was a divide between the realities of many of these women's lives and the ambitious goals they had in college, their aspirations and successes show how women at Smith and Vassar created alternative visions for the future that were not available to earlier generations of American women.

As their graduations approached, many students at Vassar reflected on their college education in their diaries. These thoughts on the consequences of getting an education were overwhelmingly positive and sentimental. After leaving Vassar in 1870 Ellen Skeel wrote sadly about how "one page of my life has closed over forever." Although she could visit her alma mater in the future, she would never again feel the same way she did as student. However, she wrote, "Friendships formed will not be dissolved, my old love can still remain, and after the bitterness of parting is forgotten, and the sore place has gone from my heart, then I am sure my whole life will be happier, richer, and I trust better, for my four years at Vassar College."[205] Mary Reed also reflected on how her education would shape her life after the president's commencement speech in 1895. She wrote,

> I can see for myself how much broader a view of life I have now than I had before I came here … our life outwardly will be much the same as those of people around us, but we will have lost much if we have not gained here the power to live a broader, deeper life than most of those we see around us.[206]

Despite outsiders' fears about health, panic over marriage prospects, uncertainty about what the future held, and accusations of being bluestockings, these students agreed that life was better as an educated woman.

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[205] The Diary of Ellen Skeel Adee, 1869-1870, 28 June 1870. 89.
[206] The Diary of Mary Reed Earl 1891-1895, May 1895, 75.

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