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The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representative of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

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ABSTRACT

NAVIGATING DISCRIMINATION: A HISTORICAL EXAMINATION OF WOMENS' EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION AND TRIUMPH WITHIN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY AND HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

by

DACKRI DIONNE DAVIS

Amelia Earhart opened the skies for many female pilots in the 1930s. It was because of her that many young women followed their reverie to becoming a pilot. This dream led many to answer the call when the United States Army Air force needed ferrying pilots when World War II began. Female aviators were contracted as civil service personnel and placed in different units to ferry planes across the country and to tow targets during live ammunition practice by combat soldiers. These units were later combined to form the Women Air force Service Pilots (WASPs). The anomaly of the WASPs was that they were the only women's unit who joined a men's only division of the Army, though they were not considered to be full military personnel. Never before had the United States government allowed female pilots to participate in the military. While providing aerial support services for the United States Air Force, the WASPs were not granted military benefits, nor were they considered part of the military, despite being required to follow all military protocols. In 1977, after Congressional hearings, the WASPs were finally granted full military honors. This dissertation examines the experiences of those women within the context of the institutions of higher education where they were trained and in terms of the varied forms of discrimination that they faced, highlighting the ways in which they navigated those challenges.

NAVIGATING DISCRIMINATION: A HISTORICAL EXAMINATION OF WOMENS' EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION AND TRIUMPH WITHIN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY AND HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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DACKRI DIONNE DAVIS

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Degree of
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in
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in
the College of Education
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2014

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAF	Army Air Forces
AAFTD	Army Air Forces Flying Training Detachment
ATC	Air Transport Command
CAA	Civil Aeronautics Authority
CPTP	Civilian Pilot Training Program
NATA	National Aviation Training Association
SPAR	Semper Paratus – Always Ready (U.S. Coast Guard motto and the name given to the women's corps of the Coast Guard during World War II
WAAC	Women's Army Auxiliary Corps)
WAC	Women's Army Corp
WAF	Women in the Air Force
WAFS	Women's Auxiliary Ferry Squadron
WASP	Women's Airforce Service Pilots
WAVES	Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service (Initially it was "Women Appointed…" until it was recognized that only officers were appointed, and the term was changed to "Accepted.")

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Although the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) often encountered discrimination as they towed targets and transported military aircraft during World War II, they disproved the belief that women were less capable than men as pilots. The remarkable women of the WASPs discovered new opportunities afforded to them by the United States military by exchanging their traditional roles by becoming civilian air pilots. They were willing to endure blatant discrimination as well as covert discrimination to fulfill the need of a nation, but to also follow their own dream of flying. Lucille Wise shares the joy this opportunity gave her, "I was just so happy to fly, I didn't care that I made less money that the other male pilots. This was a time when we could do what we love, fly!"[1] While interviewing two WASPs, Wise and Kay Gardner, they would smile as they were thinking of the answers they were about to give me. It was obvious they still felt a sense of accomplishment and pride as they remember their days as a WASP. The blatant discrimination is often dismissed by the female pilots as, "it was just the time," or "it was just the way it was," or "we were just happy to fly planes for the United States Army."[2] Why the WASPs so easily dismiss this type of discrimination is an excellent topic to consider, however, this dissertation will not address that issue in order to address broader political issues. I will address the fact that the United States Army and Congress openly discriminated against women during their tenure as pilots in the WASPs.

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[1] Lucille Doll Wise, Personal Interview, September 29, 2012. Arvada, Colorado.

I have been a strong advocate for the advancement of women my entire life. I was drawn to female aviators in the 2nd grade when my teacher allowed me to choose the topic of a required book report. I chose to read and report on Amelia Earhart. For over thirty years I have researched pilots, military air forces, and now women that represented the United States Army Airforce during World War II. My passion is ignited when I speak with women of that era and they share their stories, both positive and negative. These women were truly pioneers in their own right and this story is about their journey and ultimately their successes despite the challenges they faced. Discrimination, whether blatant or covert will never be acceptable.

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[2] Lucille Doll Wise, Personal Interview. Arvada, Colorado. She shared incidents of discrimination and prejudice, such as setting up the WASPs campaign office in the Pentagon, in a broom closet, as that was all the Pentagon would offer the group. She showed me a picture of herself with three other WASPs members in the broom closet, all of whom had a smile on their face.

Cornelia Fort was one of the original female pilots to join with Nancy Love in 1942 and began ferrying planes for the United States Army Air Force. But Fort, a seasoned pilot, had seen war from the air right at its very beginning. In her role as a flight instructor in Hawaii, she had been conducting a flying lesson over the Pacific Ocean the morning Pearl Harbor was bombed. She was in the air as the Japanese planes flew past her and watched as they dropped their bombs destroying most of U.S. Naval Fleet. It made her more determined than ever to use her flying to help the war effort. She went home to Nashville to find a way to get into the war. The Women's Auxiliary Ferry Squadron (WAFS) was her answer.[3]

On March 21, 1943, Fort was flying in formation with other pilots, when she and a male pilot began flying more closely to each other than was considered safe. His landing gear sliced off part of her left wing. She lost control of the plane and it crashed, killing her. The male pilot survived. Rumors have circulated that he was trying to impress Cornelia by doing such a risky maneuver, but no concrete evidence of that claim existed. The conclusion of one of Cornelia's officers in the WAFS was that the collision that killed her was purely accidental. The twenty-four-year-old Fort was the first in the line of American women military pilots to die on duty. Knowing the hazard of what she was doing, she had written a letter to her mother in case she died, declaring her love of her work.[4]

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[3] Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 156-157.

> If I die violently, who can say it was "before my time"? I should have dearly loved to have a husband and children. My talents in that line would have been pretty good, but if that is not to be, I want no one to grieve for me.
> I was happiest in the sky—at dawn when the quietness of the air was like a caress, when the noon sun beat down and at dusk when the sky was drenched with fading light.[5]

The way that the Army handled her death sent chills through all the female pilots. Not only did the Army not pay for the transportation of her body, or her burial, or give her family a flag to drape on her coffin, but her parents were given no gold star to signify the loss of their child in military service.[6]

In World War II, over 400,000 women served in all branches of the United States military. The U.S. Army, after being pressed by Eleanor Roosevelt, created a civilian corps of female pilots, The Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), to replace all the men that were sent to fight over seas.[7] These women accomplished a great deal. The WASP would prove that they could fly every type of fighter and bomber aircraft as well as their male counterparts. Thirty-eight WASP lost their lives in the service of their country. In the three years the program was activated, the female flyers logged over sixty million miles and flew eighty percent of all ferrying missions in the war.[8] These women were well aware that they would be continuously tested and scrutinized by the male pilots and instructors. Most men were not comfortable with the idea of female pilots, and many flatly refused to fly in an aircraft piloted by a woman. Flying, especially military flying, was primarily a man's domain at the time, and the airwomen endured discrimination and sexism even as they successfully flew military aircraft.

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[4] Ibid., 157.
[5] , by Cornelia Fort, Letter to Her Mother. Donated to the Texas Women's University WASP Archive.
[6] Yellin.

This is a story of female aviators who served their country at a time in history that forever changed the role of women in the workforce and more importantly in society. I will investigate how gender and gender discrimination influenced and shaped the experiences of many of these women. Several questions frame my research: 1) How did women, in a male-only field, become pilots in the United

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[7] Sarah Byrn Rickman, *Nancy Love and the Wasp Ferry Pilots of World War II* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2008).

[8] Deborah G. Douglas, *American Women and Flight since 1940* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004).

States Army during World War II and fly every military plane owned by the U.S.?; 2) How did females of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots in World War II navigate gender discrimination during the War and after its completion?; 3) and while the United States was still engaged in a world war, why did Congress, which authorized militarization for the women's branches of the Army, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard, refuse to do so for the WASPs and abolish the entire program with no military benefits for their service?

The current scholarship on female aviators during World War II does not provide a feminist standpoint. I demonstrate how gender, as a social construct, created an environment that was conducive for discrimination and subjugation, thus changing the trajectory of the future successes for female pilots in the United States.

CHAPTER 2

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND EPISTEMOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is conducted with a constructionist epistemology and a theoretical framework of a feminist historian. While examining the experiences of female aviators during World War II, I interviewed two pilots, Lucille Wise and Kay Gardner, from this era and used the transcripts of numerous recorded interviews of other females that were also service pilots during the war. My methodology is historical and my methods of research include: personal interviews, primary sources (personal letters, archives, newsletters, etc), secondary sources, pictures, and interviews conducted by an archivist at Texas Women's University where the Women's Airforce Service Pilot's archives are located. My research methods are traditionally used in history and by giving special attention to the oral histories of these female pilots, I offer an enhanced understanding of their experiences and how history has been written to portray their stories. As Harriet McAdoo states, "The narratives give an accurate view of how people view themselves at a given point in time.”[9] This method allows the subject to emphasize the details of her life and to express the emotions felt during the circumstances being studied. Oral histories allow for a narrative approach and can give insight to the historian that otherwise would be missed through other ways of research. The context of their experiences, discussed next, highlights the importance of the oral history interviews.

Female pilots were contracted as civil service personnel and placed in units to ferry planes across the country. These units were later combined to form the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs). Numerous women joined the armed services during World War II, but the anomaly of the WASPs was that they were the only women’s unit who joined a men’s only division of the Army.[10] Molly Merryman stated, “Never before had the United States military allowed female pilots to participate in the service. Being the only females in this capacity, they challenged many social mores and in return experienced various forms of gender discrimination.”[11] This may explain why their story has been absent in so many history books for the past 60 years.

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[9] Harriette McAdoo, "Oral History as a Primary Resource in Educational Research," *The Journal of Negro Education* 49, no. 4 (1980).
[10] Douglas.
[11] Leslie Haynsworth and David Tommey, *Amelia Earharts's Daughters: The Wild and Glorious Story of American Women Aviators from World War II to*

The achievements of over one thousand female pilots may be lost in the collective conscience of the American people, but their successes cannot be forgotten. Debra Douglas argued, "The mere fact that women were able to break the gender barrier in the cockpit is a success in its own right."[12] Although many women were called to the workforce during World War II, the 1940s were not a time of women's liberation. It was rather a time when women were expected to substitute for the men who were fighting the country's war. The general societal expectation was that when men returned home from war they would be given their jobs back and women would then return to the home. This expectation was a generally accepted as a fact, many females who entered the workforce during the 1940s had no intention of leaving their new found jobs after the war.[13] Douglas argued,

> Wartime expectations of what the return to peace would mean for America were quite different from what actually happened. The war seemed to have fostered an optimistic expectation that peace would usher in the dawn of aerial age in which women would have a significant part.[14]

However society might have expected the war effort to affect women, World War II proved to be a fertile ground

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the Dawn of the Space Age (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1998), 23.

[12] Douglas, 223.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 107.

for them to grow and challenge the status quo. The narrative of war often capture cultural constructions more than seeming facts do and in World War II, the construction of gender was important to understanding and defining the experiences of female pilots. In examining the construction of gendered work in nonindustrial cultures, noted anthropologist Margaret Mead found that when women began to do what had previously been labeled "men's work," the men would shift to an area of labor that was not yet labeled according to gender, would designate this area as being exclusively "men's work," and would subsequently redefine it as being the work that makes men different from women.[15] When women enter male-dominated professions, gender ideology creates a significant divide in the meanings of labor.[16] This history of occupations in the United States illustrates that when significant numbers of women gain access, a profession is likely to become "feminized." Teaching, in the United States, provides a central example of an occupation that shifted from male to female as the construction of the work became gendered as

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[15] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982, 1993), 15.
[16] Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2002).

"women's work."[17] As the requirement for cheap workers expanded in the early 1800s and the commercial growth that required a literate workforce, women began to enter the teaching profession to meet this need. Local governments established schools to support universal primary and later secondary education. To control growing expenses, school boards began to hire women, and by the 1880s, the male schoolmaster had given way to the female school teacher.[18] Thus, feminization creates positions for more women, but with lower pay and status than that of the men who once worked in each of these jobs. Once women outnumber men, a profession loses prestige and pay rates deteriorate, while at the same time, gender hierarchy persists, for men who remain hold the best-paid and most prestigious positions as supervisors and managers.[19] Gerda Lerner states, "The feminization of teaching rested upon gender ideology: Women were considered well suited to work with children in low-paid teaching positions, while men monopolized the offices of principals and school superintendents."[20] Furthermore, school teachers in the United States once had to resign after marriage, reinforcing the idea that woman's primary work remained in the home. The construction of gender influenced the opportunities that women were afforded in the workforce and the military.

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[17] Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1979).
[18] Ibid.
[19] Freedman.
[20] Lerner, 157.

From its very inception, "Gender was the defining point of the WASPs program and women accepted into WASP training already had to be proven fliers with pilot's licenses and seventy-five hours of flight time, while male trainees did not have to have pilot's licenses or any flight experience whatsoever to be accepted in to the pilot training program."[21] Women navigated through gender discrimination by proving that they were capable of being first-rate pilots. In doing so, they challenged the construction of gender performances.

The WASPs were an anomaly and for that, their story deserves to be researched and written. Looking back to 1937, when Earhart disappeared while flying around the world, it may have been an ironic foreshadowing of the disappearance of her gender from the air. Douglas contends that many younger women benefited from a momentary revival of opportunity with the WASPs during World War II. Regrettably, the War proved but an aberration. Douglas states, "The role women pilots played in World War II from

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[21] Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (Wasps) of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 121.

1940 nearly until the present was within a male bastion."[22] Though the WASPs were avid pilots and completed their duties with the highest esteem, gender discrimination would rob them of their dutiful place in history for many years. I research and write about the WASPs experience to demonstrate that female pilots were produced from a long line of women in many fields who pushed for equality and freedom, both professional and personal. I provide evidence that the WASP experienced exceptional discrimination in the United States military as pilots during World War II. I aim to establish a perspective of how this discrimination was experienced and then challenged by the female aviators, in the cockpit, classrooms, and in mainstream society. I argue that using oral histories and primary documents from the female pilots and the government program are the appropriate methods to conduct research for this study because they offer the foundations for a narrative that highlights both discrimination and resistance.

In order to understand how women gained access to the cockpit in World War II, it is important to understand the trajectory of women's educational and aviation experiences in the United States. There are many variables to these experiences, but ultimately there is a common theme to women’s access to education, particularly at the college and university level, as well as their journey through the air. The commonality is that women were treated differently from their male counterparts by being denied access to education, especially higher education for many years, or once accepted they were diverted from taking courses that were considered too rigorous for a woman. The twentieth century was a time in history when many women were at last granted admission to the highest levels of educational institutions. However, to understand the historical and social implications on women’s admission to higher learning, it is imperative to have a general understanding of the history of education within the United States. Schools and colleges, as powerful institutions in the formation of individual identity, social identity, and societal expectations, serve as the necessary context for such events as the work of the WASP members in World War II.

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[22] Douglas.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

As stated earlier, my method is historical and my sources of research include: interviews, primary sources (personal letters, archives, newsletters, etc), secondary sources, pictures, and videos. There are many justifications for using oral history as a research method for telling the WASP’s story, but as with all research methods, there are drawbacks to consider. Oral history, as with any form of history, can contribute to the understanding of women’s stories. Sherna Gluck and Daphne Patai argue against the innocent assumptions that gender alone is enough to unite women without regard to the power that race and class play in a woman’s world. Using oral history methods for women’s research is to be commended; however, “This work and others attest to the determination of many feminist scholars to examine carefully and critically both their own motivations in conducting oral histories and the notion of a smooth transference of information from speaker to recorder/writer to reader.”[1] Gluck and Patai warn scholars that oral history alone is not conclusive in telling a person’s history, as the scholar (I would argue feminist or any other type of historian) may allow their own bias to interfere with the process. It is essential that the historian hone her skills and to be aware that such biases can be detrimental to the overall history being presented.

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[1] Jennifer Scanlon, "Challenging the Imbalances of Power in Feminist Oral History: Developing a Take-and-Give Methodology," *Women's Studies International Forum* 16, no. 6 (December 1993): 639-645, 643.

W.K. Baum defined oral history as, "A method of collecting historical information."[2] Many educational researchers find oral history methods challenging, but rewarding. The narrator is the primary source of information and gives a first-hand account of the situation. To conduct a proper interview, the historian must choose the participant circumspectly. Although it may be a challenge to understand the participant's agenda, the validity of the story must be checked for accuracy. Baum says that an oral history is, "Not a random conversation that was tape recorded. Instead, it is a very systemic, planned, structured, or semi-structured, directed exposition of a particular topic."[3] As a part of the system, the historian must be willing to check the facts of the interview for validity. When applied to narrative projects, two levels of validity are important – the story told by a research participant and the validity of the analysis, or the story told by the researcher.[4] Validity in this context involves the reliability of the facts being told and recorded, and then retold by the historian. Catherine Kohler Riessman argued that research projects are situated within parameters and debates of the particular social science discipline, and by the epistemologies and theories that ground the empirical work.[5] Consequently, ways of thinking about validity and ethics are products of the paradigms that generate them. Kohler Riessman states, "Investigators choosing to write realistic tales will have to persuade audiences with a different rhetoric than investigators adopting interpretive, feminist, constructionist, and other perspectives."[6]

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[2] W.K. Baum, *Oral History for the Local Historical Society* (Washington, D.C.: American Association for State and Local History, 1974), 41.

[3] Ibid.

One of the most important steps when preparing for an interview is to create questions that will help the narrator retrieve memories. However, it must be done without imposing on the story being told. It also helps to create an environment that will encourage the narrator to tell his or her story to answer the question being posed. Conducting research interviews is incredibly challenging. It is vital that the narrator trust the interviewer in order to validate the information. If the narrator is uncomfortable with the researcher, then the results may not be as reliant or reflective. Most narrators want to know that the researcher genuinely cares about the story and trusts that he or she will convey to the world the most factual story. As Antoinette Errante states, "The voice of the oral history narrative not only emerges from the relationship between history and biography, the personal and collective in the narrator, but also within and between narrator and historian."[7] The researcher must be honest with the intent of the study and then truly adhere to the parameters set. When conducting an interview, it is best to use a tape recorder and take field notes during the process. It is vital to take notes that include the nonverbal clues given by the narrator, as well as any changes in tone of voice or response time for the narrator answering questions.[8] After completing the initial interview, it is wise to quickly create a transcript. This will allow the historian an opportunity to begin the analysis process.

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[4] Catherine Kohler-Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2008), 180-183.
[5] Ibid., 184.
[6] Ibid., 185.

The analysis process begins by examining the data for validity and reliability. A researcher cannot use a single interview and state the information as truth. It is crucial to continue researching in order to validate the story of your interviewee. David Fox believes that before oral history can be accepted as truth, three criteria must be met: 1) The same view of information is given by two independent, unrelated sources, 2) in the case of several sources, one of them must be an independent primary source, directly involved in the incident; and, 3) there must be an absence of data collected from a reputable source that would present a contradictory view, or an absence of other data that supports the view.[9]

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[7] Antoinette Errante, "But Sometimes You're Not Part of the Story: Oral Histories and Ways of Remembering and Telling," *Educational Researcher* 29, no. 2 (2000): 16-27, 25.

[8] McAdoo: 418-420.

In order for these three elements to solidify meaning as truth, Fox demonstrates the epistemological stance of objectivity. Objectivity, according to Crotty, is the epistemological view that things exist as meaningful entities independently of consciousness and experience, that they have truth and meaning residing in them as objects.[10] Fox demonstrates the objective approach to oral history by demanding that an independent primary source must have been directly involved and that objectivity was used in their narrative concerning the event described in the interview. Although my epistemological stance differs from Fox, his requirement to check two sources certainly adds validity to an oral history narrative. Peter Novick argued that "Objectivity has been one of the central sacred terms of professional historians, like 'health' for physicians, or 'valor' for the professional arm."[11] While I concur with Novick the search for objectivity has been the foundation of history, I argue that we now understand that history is written by individuals that must construct meaning from facts and events.

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[9] David J. Fox, *The Research Process in Education* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969), 14-18.

[10] Michael Crotty, *The Foundation of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 1998), 11-14.

Why choose an oral history research method over a quantitative method? Oral history research gives a voice to the narrator and enables the historian or researcher to have the opportunity to listen, record, and relay the memories that may otherwise never enter into the history books, journals, or museums.[12] In educational research, oral history is an essential element to capturing the quintessence of the moment. By providing a personal narrative, a story can embody the essence of the event. The personal description allows for the account to be told from the individual's recollection and thus reflects a perspective that a secondary source may overlook. It provides a great deal of data that stratifies many cultures and gives a synopsis of the situation being studied. In contrast to written archives, oral histories prove the audience to which the narrator directs his or her story is immediate and interactive. The story's dynamic of personal and collective voice and identity emerges as a result of the interaction between historian (the interviewer) and narrator (the informant). Although the "teller" of the story is the narrator, the story is distorted when we do not take into consideration the historian's participation in the oral history interview.[13] My role as the historian telling the story is central to the construct of meaning for the reader. I argue that historians, including myself, must present the facts of record in way that the reader is able to gain an insight to the story being presented. The historian's work, however, is not simply to record the facts. Often times, the records are incomplete or contradictory, and the historian therefore has to try to address the gaps and contradictions. The memories' of individuals can also lead to gaps and contradictions in their story.

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[11] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream* (Chicago: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 11.

[12] Fenwick W English, "A Critical Appraisal of Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot's 'Portraiture' as a Method of Educational Research," *Educational Researcher* 29, no. (October 2000): 21-26, 22.

Oral historians have written frequently about the role of memory in oral history. Trevor Lummis and Alessandro Portelli both discuss doubtful memories and unreliable reports, and Portelli points to the particular clarity of some memories.[14] David B. Pillemer notes the importance of sensory impressions in especially vivid memories.[15] Elliott Oring and Ronald J. Grele discuss the process of remembering in oral history interviews, in particular potential (negative) effects of interviewer input.[16] But there is no literature to date focused on the types of talk surrounding failures to remember or particularly lucid memories in oral history interviews. However, there is a growing body of research on remembering in natural contexts. Ulric Neisser discusses forgetting and causes of forgetting in everyday contexts, but not how people have a discourse around failing to remember.[17] Michael Ross and Diane Holmberg exemplify collaborative remembering and several instances of talk about memory and forgetfulness, but their focus is elsewhere and they do not comment on the talk itself.[18] Neisser writes, "The study of any kind of memory should properly begin with a description of the material that is to be remembered."[19] I argue, however, that the study of any kind of memory could just as properly begin with a description of the language used to talk about remembering because language has a structure that exemplifies meaning. The historian must make conceptual inferences from a narrative using language from the storyteller. Whatever the content, stories demand the consequential linking of events or ideas.

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[13] Errante, 17.

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[14] Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), 30-34.

[15] David B. Pillemer, *Memory Observed: Remembering in Natural Contexts* (New York: Worth 2000), 12-13.

[16] Ronald J. Grele, *History and the Languages of History in the Oral History Interview: Who Answers Whose Questions and Why?* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1994), 43-47.

[17] Ulric Neisser, "Memory: What Are the Important Questions?," in *Memory Observed: Remembering in Natural Contexts*(San Francisco: Freeman, 1982), 260-262.

[18] Michael Ross and Diane Holmberg, "Gender Differences in the Recall of a Close Relationship," in *Memory Observed: Remembering in Natural Contexts*(New York: Worth, 2000), 42-45.

Interviewers may also actively participate in the remembering process. Of course, they ask the questions, but they sometimes help construct the answers as well. As active listeners, interviewers fill in the gaps and re-image the scenes described in order to understand one response and to formulate follow-up questions. Moreover, interviewers sometimes explicitly address narrators' memories, either to insure understanding or to elicit help. This is why oral history accounts are unique. They rely on the narrator's memory and ability to recall events and details. What distinguishes oral histories from other kinds of interviews or oral narratives is the concept of memory. Errante contends, "Memory is not simply an exercise of recalling; there are many ways of remembering and different reasons why we may (or may not) want to remember.”[20] Unfortunately, our minds are not accurate recorders of life events.

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[19] Neisser, 263.

Humans only have the capacity to process small amounts of information in our working memory at any one time. In a manner of speaking, most of the information we receive from the environment simply goes in one ear and out the other. Ormrod contends this happens because so much information is being received the brain must make an instant decision as to whether the information being computed is worth saving. If the data are worth retaining, then the brain will store it in the long term memory file.[21] We retain such a small percentage of the information we receive, many memory and learning theorists believe that long-term memory storage often involves a process of construction, whereby we use the bits and pieces of the information we do retain to build a reasonable memory of the events that happen in life.[22] Sometimes human memory is reasonably accurate. But at other times a person’s sense of confidence about a memory is not always a good indication of the memory’s accuracy. Although people sometimes “remember” something they have never actually experienced, it is more often the case that they cannot retrieve something they did experience.[23] It is with this in mind that many researchers choose to not use oral history methods for research because data collected through oral history research is reliant on the narrator's memory and ability to create a timeline of events.

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[20] Errante, 17.

[21] Robert L. Osgood, " Undermining the Common School Ideal: Intermediate Schools and Ungraded Classes in Boston, 1838-1900," *History of Education Quarterly* 37, no. Winter (1997): 375-398, 381.

[22] Ibid., 382

When a narrator is interviewed about a particular time in his or her life, the interviewer must be careful about the choice of questions and probing remarks used to rouse the memory. When interviewing Lucile Doll Wise, for example, when I asked her about a time when she was discriminated against as a pilot, she stated,

> Yes, while at Eagle Pass, the commanding officer was very discriminatory to the six WASPs stationed there. He would make comments about women being too nervous to fly, but almost everyone was very kind to me most of the time.[24]

James Gee argued that "situated meanings" need to be understood by the interviewer; otherwise the recollection process can be hampered by a lack of trust, thus creating a negative emotional response.[25] Emotion is extraordinarily attached to memory. Because of this, participants may not always share the entire story, especially when emotional trauma is involved. I believe this to be true of Lucille

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[23] Ibid., 383-385

[24] , by Wise.

[25] James Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

Wise. As she answered my questions, she always hesitated when answering questions around discrimination. For example, when asked if the WASPs were frequently discriminated against, Wise would state, "oh no, mostly we were treated fairly."[26] However, if I asked more directly, did you make as much money as male pilot doing the same job, she would adamantly state, "No, men were always paid more for the same run as a WASP."[27] Wise was instrumental in the fight for military benefits for the WASP, but would be careful not to use the word discrimination often. There was such a negative connotation to that word for her; she could not emotionally allow herself to use it. Annelle Bulechek, WASP pilot, when interviewed about discrimination stated,

> If you were killed during similar training exercises as men, you were not recognized as military personnel. You didn't get the $10,000 insurance, your parents had no gold star, there was no military funeral – there was nothing…When a trainee died, the women took up a collection to send the body home. No one questioned the policy. We just didn't know any better.[28]

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[26] Interview with Wise

[27] Ibid.

[28] Elona Boggs, "World War II Pilot Remembers Experience as 'Ride of Her Life'," *American Press* 2001.

It is difficult to ascertain why this generation of women refused to use the word discrimination as openly as we do today. Regrettably, memory attached to emotion is the largest drawback to conducting oral history as a research method.

Although oral history methods have not been the widely utilized in the academic community in the past, these methods have certainly gained legitimacy. According to Errante, there is a celebration of the personal narrative in educational research as it legitimizes oral histories as sources of documentation. She warns that "the excessive intuitive appeal of 'voice' and 'narrative' has perhaps bred a certain methodological complacency."[29] Errante argued that among educational researchers there is more advocacy for the use of narratives as a research strategy than there is detailed discussion of particular methods for engaging in narrative work.

No doubt it takes time and practice to become comfortable with the method of oral history. Unlike quantitative analysis, one cannot simply create tables of data and generate a report to demonstrate the findings. Oral history research is a long and arduous undertaking. The researcher must spend a great deal of time preparing for the interviews, conducting the interviews, analyzing the results, and researching documents and other sources to check for accuracy and validity of the data collected. Kohler Riesmman contends that researchers must be meticulous when documenting primary sources and need to make their "modes of inquiry explicit – how they moved from a piece of evidence, for example, to a theoretical formulation."[30] Oral history methods typically produce an enormous amount of detailed information, but it concerns a much smaller number of people and cases.

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[29] Errante, 17.

As with any research method, oral history has drawbacks but, it is an excellent method to view a segment of an individual's life experience. This method opens a conversation to the past that might otherwise go unheard. Oral history can become a great asset to educational researchers if used properly. Baum believes oral histories, "Could be helpful in a study of the interaction between teachers and their students in a variety of curriculum models within the same system. . . and would provide valuable information not available in standard test-retest designs."[31] Jennifer Scanlon argued, "Therefore, ethnographic research is crucial, as are case studies, survey research, time series, design experiments, action research, and other means to collect reliable evidence for engaging in unfettered argument about education issues."[32]

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[30] Kohler Riessman, 186.
[31] McAdoo: 418.

In many respects, oral histories are the greatest connection scholars have to women's history. According to Jennifer Scanlon, recording women's voices and then telling their stories has, arguably, "Been empowering for all involved, for the woman telling her own story, the woman recording and then retelling this story, and then the reader, who vicariously experiences it."[33] Wise shared a moment in her interview that gave insight to her true feelings about being treated differently from the male pilots. She said,

> We were quite devastated to be sent home before the war was over, but we were grateful that we had been given the opportunity to prove that women could fly military aircraft the military way, just as well as the men. Our record was as good as the men's for the same type of flying, and in some respects better.[34]

For decades, feminist historians have been arguing that oral histories of women are empowering for all those involved. They provide a voice for women whose stories would otherwise go unrecorded and offer readers personal stories of and insights about groups of women they might not otherwise meet.[35] Women quite often have been left out of the historical record. As a high school AP US History student, I remember often asking where are the women, why are they being left out of our textbooks and conversations. Do women not have a history? Of course they do, but "where" is it? Debatably when women are included in the story, the reader is typically receiving the voice of the male historian. Certainly the Women's Movement coupled with the Feminist Movement has placed a greater emphasis on recording and writing women's stories. However, who gets to determine what history will be told? This dissertation attempts to tell one history of women aviators during World War II.

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[32] Scanlon: 639-645, 639.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Interview with Wise

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[35] Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

GENDER AS A STARTING POINT

Many historians, anthropologists, and cultural critics have written about the impact World War II had not only upon altering constructions of gender, but also constructions of race, class, sexuality, and nationalism. Because World War II was a “total war,” efforts of all citizens focused on preparing for the war. In the United States, total war resulted in the recruitment of women and teenagers to work in manufacturing plants and the incorporation of women into all branches of the military, participating in nearly all military actions except for combat.[1]

The introduction of women into what had previously been established as a proving ground for masculinity subsequently resulted in a crisis of representation regarding gender.[2] Because gender is a social construction, we can presume that the greater the threat to gender identity, the greater the backlash against those individuals who constituted that threat.[3]

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[1] D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union," *The Journal of Military History* 57, no. 2 (1993): 210-213.

[2] Merryman, 1801.

[3] Lerner, 23-25.

Madeleine Arnot and Mairtin Mac an Ghaill argue, “Feminist research demonstrates the historical continuities of gender politics into late modernity especially through the imposition of dominant norms of heterosexuality, male violence and economic subordination of women.”[4] In order to understand how women’s history is written, it is imperative to look at gender as the starting point which allows the reader to think through the procedures which sustain difference, over and above the fluidities and trajectories of late modernity.[5] Arnot and Mac an Ghaill contend,

> Gender as boundary maintenance, as examples of border work and classifications, gender as the means of regulation, experience and resistance is never the complete narrative, it is only the beginning of a sophisticated analysis of the operation of social power within a transforming social order.[6]

Historically, most personal narratives are based on male dominance and masculine stories. Natalie Zemon Davis argues, “Women were always defined in some relation to men.” She contends the goal should be to understand the significance of the sexes, of gender groups in the historical past.[7] R.C. Connell, building on Gramsci's ideas, argued that hegemony continues to lead the historical narrative and hence leaves gender issues to be studied by feminist scholars.[8] Arnot and Mac an Ghaill argue that from the moment sex and gender are separated in our minds, there has been an interplay of positions, some attempting to explore as deeply as possible the nature of "gender as classification, categorization, a social phenomenon which is constructed and reconstructed, contextualized and recontexualised, which has its own historical dynamic, but is also a contemporary transformation."[9] Gender is commonly understood to be of great significance in shaping historical patterns. Gender researchers offer insights into gender as embodiment, gender as identity and identification, gender as rejection, abjection, and projection, as well as gender as resolution to conflicts.[10] Joan Scott's definition of gender is "A constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power."[11] Scott argues that by 1986, feminists had already adopted the term “gender” to refer to the social construction of sex differences, and theorists had already posed “gender” as an analytic category, akin to class and race. She contends that a few historians had begun to use the term “gender history” in addition to “women’s history,” and a handful had looked at men and masculinity as part of a gender history that did not focus solely on women.[12] Scott faced an enormous amount of criticism from both traditional male historians as well as feminist historians for her paradigm shift of using gender. Joanne Meyerowitz states “Scott built ‘Gender’ with an artful use of argument. In one brief essay, she managed to summarize the advent of gender history, provide critiques of earlier theories of women’s subordination, introduce historians to deconstructionist methods, and lay out an agenda for future historical studies.”[13] Scott argues, “‘Gender’ was meant to historicize and relativize women and to conceive of them as integral to history, not simply as agents, but as ‘women.’”[14] Whereas Gerda Lerner contends, “Even in its surface meaning, the term ‘Women’s History’ calls into question the claim to universality which 'History' generally assumes as a given. If historical studies, as we traditionally know them, were actually focused on men and women alike, then there would be no need for a separate subject."[15] Lerner argues that the idea of the oppression of women, while certainly a historical fact, is of limited usefulness to historical inquiry. More important to her, are questions such as: What were women doing? How were they doing it? What was their own understanding of their place in the world?[16] All people, in every society, are assigned specific roles and indoctrinated to perform to the expectations and values of that society. But for women this has always meant social indoctrination to a value system that imposed upon them greater restrictions of the range of choices than those of men, essentially, leveraging power in men's favor and out of reach for women's individual decision making.[17]

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[4] Madeleine Arnot and Mairtin Mac an Ghaill, "(Re)Contextualising Gender Studies in Education: Schooling in Late Modernity," in *The Routledge Falmer Reader in Gender and Education*, ed. Madelendine Arnot and Mairtin Mac an Ghaill(New York: Routledge, 2006), 15.

[5] Ibid., 3.

[6] Ibid., 4.

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[7] Natalie Zemon Davis, "'Women's History' in Transition: The European Case," *Feminist Studies* 3, no. (1976): 83-103, 90.

[8] RW Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1995), 7.

[9] Ibid., 10.

[10] Ibid., 11-13.

[11] Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053-1075, 1056.

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[12] Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, second ed. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), 23-28.
[13] Joanne Meyerowitz, "A Histoy of Gender," *American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (December 2008): 1346-1356, 1346.
[14] Joan Wallach Scott, "Unanswered Questions," *American Historical Review* 115, no. 5 (2008): 1422-1430, 1427.

Thus the analysis of gender is a powerful lens through which to understand how power works at the societal level and how power works through men and women's lives at the deepest most personal level. Scott makes this point clearly when she argued, "'Gender' was a call to disrupt the powerful pull of biology by opening every aspect of sexed identity to interrogation, including the question of whether or not male/female, masculine/feminine was the contrast being invoked."[18] Gaining an understand of the power dynamic is instrumental in understanding why men's accomplishments and efforts throughout time are the ones that are recorded as history of a "people."[19]

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[15] Lerner, xiii.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 3.

There is an immense quantity of research regarding the definition of power. In 1957, Robert Dahl explained one face of power exists when, "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do."[20] His work was critiqued by Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, as they believed there was a second face of power. In their words, "Power is not solely a matter of getting B to do something that she does not want to do, but can also be a matter of preventing B from doing what she wants to do."[21] The second face of power was not accepted as the only power dynamics in existence. In 1974, Steven Lukes responded with his idea of a third face of power. He called his third face of the power, the radical conception of power. In this power struggle, he saw that B may very well be manipulated to doing what A wants done. In this case, Luke claimed, "Power could be exerted even if B consciously wants to do what A desires. If B acts contrary to her objective and real interests then power is being exercised."[22]

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[18] Joan Wallach Scott, *Feminism and History*, Oxford Readings in Feminism (Oxford University Press, 1996), 112.

[19] Connell, 27.

[20] Robert A. Dahl, "The Concept of Power," *Behavioral Sciences* 2, no. July (1957): 201-203.

[21] Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, "Two Faces of Power," *American Political Science Review* 56, no. 4 (1962): 947-952, 948.

Michel Foucault thought differently about the fourth face of power. He believed power was an underlying force that affected every aspect of life from medicine to religion. He saw power in all practices, whether professionally or socially, "Power is co-extensive with the social body; there are no spaces of primal liberty between the meshes of its network."[23] He argued, "Power is not a possessed capacity that can be exercised by individuals, groups, or states. Although what I say and do results in the formation of the subject 'B' – and in this way I am exercising power- it may be more accurate to say that we are both the 'vehicles' of power."[24] Researchers continue to theorize who holds the power and who drives decisions, especially in terms of gender studies and history. Scott disagrees with Foucault and maintains that historians should consider analyzing the language of gender, to observe how perceived sex difference had appeared historically as a natural and fundamental opposition.[25] Meyerowitz adds, “These perceived differences had often subordinated and constrained women, yes, but they had also provided a primary way of signifying other hierarchical relationships.”[26] Lerner also challenges Foucault and Scott’s ideas, by stating,

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[22] Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, second ed. (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillian, 2005), 23.

[23] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans., Leo Marshall, John Merpham, and Kate Soper, fourth ed. (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1980), 142.

[24] Ibid., 98.

> Women are not a minority in any sense. Women are a sex. They have experienced educational, legal, and economic discrimination, as have members of minority groups, but they, unlike truly marginal groups, are distributed through every group and class in society.[27]

Lerner claims that women have been left out of history, not because of the evil conspiracies of men in power or male historians in particular, but because society has considered history only in male-centered terms.[28] While Lerner makes appealing points of contention, I argue that Scott’s ideas of gender construction and constraints are more accurate in regard to the significant absence of women’s stories represented in historical research.

In many respects, women’s history over the decades reverberates with a sense of progress and with the idea that the arrival of modernity sharpened women's and men's historical writing, giving it a depth and sophistication it lacked earlier.[29] Bonnie G. Smith argues that most of the past histories written about women were done by amateur historians. As a result, most histories of women were never published for the public to read and certainly were never implemented in educational text books. Smith also contends that some feminist amateur historians, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, wrote histories of their movement, documenting their activism and accomplishments from archives they themselves had compiled and even integrating complete copies of speeches, newspaper reports, and other primary source materials.[30] Luckily there was a drive to create women's archives and collections of works about women. This of course would be useful when the Women's Movement spurred historians to write the history of women.

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[25] Meyerowitz: 1348-1350.
[26] Ibid., 1347.
[27] Lerner, 170.
[28] Ibid.

According to Smith, "When the professionalization of history occurred in the nineteenth century, women were eager to join in as researchers and scholarly authors despite the discrimination that kept them out of many elite schools and left them more or less ghettoized as professors in women’s colleges or as archivists, librarians, and research assistants.”[31] These same female scholars sought out training in the scientific methods so their work would be recognized in the professional world of scholars. Smith argues that female scholars were never truly recognized by their male counterparts for their historical contributions because they chose to write on topics such as the history of households and domestic service, which she contends were not important subjects for historians at that point in United States history.[32] However, by the late 1960s, feminism had become a mass movement, producing a greater number of professional and amateur writers of women’s history, along with significant legal gains.[33] As a result, an increase in women’s history courses were demanded on many college and university campuses, as well as an increase in scholarly journals printing women’s history articles and holding conferences to examine new research being conducted across the United States. Smith argues that “the institutional power of women’s history burgeoned as never before.”[34] Judith Bennett argues that at the beginning of the 1960s wave of scholarship on women, historians were full of ridicule, claiming, for example, that women's history could only be legitimate if women were studied as part of the more important family unit or that the most legitimate women's history was the history of feminism and thus a form of advocacy, an issue that still resonates.[35]

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[29] Bonnie G Smith, "Women's History: A Retrospective from the United States," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 35, no. 3 (Spring 2010): 736-738.
[30] Ibid., 739-741.

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[31] Ibid., 726.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Glenn, 387.
[34] Smith, 727.

More recently there has been a sense in the United States that women's history must receive some general acknowledgement in the academy. The impact of such attitudes toward women's history on scholarship itself has yet to be determined, but, as in the past, the writing of women's history has continued despite the seemingly permanent place of professional condemnation.[36] As Smith contends, "As these documentaries, investigative, and synthesizing efforts preceded, debates over method, approach, coverage, and even the contours of the field emerged, producing spirited, sometimes bitter, controversy and deep challenges to accepted truths."[37] From the beginning there were struggles over the inclusion of women of color, different ethnicities, and homosexuality.[38] Contemporary politics also impinges on other aspects of women's history, sparking debates and antagonisms over definitions and subject matter. One such argument is the inordinate attention paid to U.S. and European women's history, a contention that is in part a by-product of both the massive scholarship in non-Western women's history and the wider globalization of the economy and politics.[39] More recently, scholars of women's history have directed their investigations to situate women in world history. Smith states, "While scholars around the world have long been writing their own regionally based women's histories, the challenges of writing women into a truly global history have been extraordinary in the past two decades."[40] In terms of aviation, there was huge surge of books written in the past twenty years about female aviators flying in combat during World War II for the Soviet Union.

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[35] Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 48-51.
[36] Smith, 728.
[37] Ibid., 732.
[38] Lillian Faderman, *To Believe in Women: What Lesbians Have Done for America - a History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 32-36.

Reclaiming women's historical past has been a major activity and accomplishment of the feminist movement in the United States. Susan A. Mann contends,

> This excavation of earlier feminist writings and activism not only served to legitimize feminism as a serious and ongoing political struggle, but it also unearthed the subjugated knowledge of those whose theory and practice had been buried, silenced, or

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[39] Smith, 741-743.
[40] Ibid., 740.

> deemed less credible by more androcentric historical narratives.[41]

It is this context that makes oral history projects so important to the field of history. Feminist theory encourages us to listen to women's voices and to provide opportunities for women to have a voice. However, "women's history" as a category can be problematic. Scott argued that "Paradoxically, the history of women has kept "women" outside history. And the result is that "women" as a natural phenomenon is reinscribed, even as we assert that women are discursively constructed."[42] To put it another way, Scott argues that the sex/gender binary, which defined gender as the social assignment of meaning to biologically given sex differences, remains in place despite a generation of scholarship aimed at deconstructing that opposition.[43] Denise Riley, addressing feminists, offers a Foucauldian genealogy of "women," a term more often treated as a transparent description. Even as she distinguishes "female persons" from "women," her reading has often been mistaken for "a sort of Woman through the Ages approach" which is something she specifically wanted to avoid.[44] Scott contends that this has been the case and it is a measure of how resistant history as a discipline has been to Foucault’s radical epistemological challenge, and also how well-disciplined history’s seemingly rebellious daughters have turned out to be.[45] I agree with Lerner when she claims that the history of women must include the understanding of the feminist consciousness as a historical phenomenon.[46]

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[41] Susan A. Mann, "Feminism and Imperialism, 1890-1920: Our Anti-Imperialist Sisters - Missing in Action from American Feminist Sociology," *Sociological Inquiry* 78, No. 4, no. November (2008): 461-489, 465.
[42] Scott, "Unanswered Questions," 1424.
[43] Ibid.

To comprehend how women experienced the workforce and the military during World War II, it is critical to realize how gender, as a social construct, frames a woman’s experience. Gender is defined by the meanings that a given culture assigns to individuals with specific biological bodies and is a “historically specific knowledge about sexual differences.”[47] It therefore changes over time and can vary among different nations and cultures. Once women and men are placed in cultural categories, their behaviors, expectations, occupations, and thoughts are shaped by the meaning their culture has established about what constitutes being a member of a specific gender.[48]

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[44] Denise Riley, *"Am I That Name?" Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003), 7.
[45] Scott, "Unanswered Questions," 1424.
[46] Lerner, 6-10.
[47] Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 23.

Gender categories remain fiercely defended and place roles and limitations on individuals based entirely upon the category they occupy.[49] Judith Butler explains this phenomenon in part by revealing the normative function that gender performs for the culture and by the regulatory process that produce the bodies it governs. Butler defines gender as, "A construction determined and sustained by performances influenced by a culture's assumptions about itself."[50] The category of "woman" thus becomes not a living body, but a boundary that varies according to outside regulation. In other words, the body of woman is determined by cultural rules and expectations.

Merryman argues that the transitory construction of gender is in danger of being revealed at those points where challenges to such cultural rules and expectations are raised. If, as Butler asserts, gender is a performance, a ritual reenactment of socially established learning in which the act of repetition conceals its origins, then a challenge that interrupts this repetition can disrupt the entire performance and its assumptions by drawing attention to the instability and fiction of the performance.[51] If this occurs, the culture that constructed these gendered boundaries will have to enforce a return to the repetitive performance and either denies that any rupture occurred or punish those individuals who "shifted the culture's prescribed performance of gender by naming their actions as unnatural transgressions."[52]

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[48] Lerner, 24-27.

[49] Merryman, 185.

[50] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 5.

According to Merryman, "The process of feminist historical inquiry not only offers insight into the specific people or events being (re)discovered, but also uncovers valuable information about the processes through which the identities and expectations of the separate genders have been and are being developed." [53] Merryman challenges that feminist historical inquiry not only improves our understanding of events that women have participated in but also uncovers constructions of gender that better develops the body of knowledge through which feminist theorists approach their subjects. According to feminist theorist, Teresa de Laurentis, the "essential difference" of feminism is found not in the category of women, but in feminism's "historic specificity" in understanding the ways that women live (and have lived) differently from men and from each other.[54]

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[51] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 11-15.
[52] Merryman, 186.
[53] Ibid., 187.

Understanding the difference between sex and gender provides a key to understanding the differences in men’s and women’s historical experience. In the workplace, for example, women and men were assigned jobs that reflected the employer’s beliefs about the kind of work each sex should do. During the early twentieth century, society in the United States was one whose understanding of gender included the conviction that women’s primary obligations were to the family and their basic talents domestic; female wage earners were persistently channeled into jobs that corresponded with the kind of work done in the domestic sphere or with characteristic along with women.[55] A history of how schooling established those identities and expectations is instructive, as the next chapter demonstrates.

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[54] Teresa de Laurentis, *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 33-38.

[55] Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron DeHart, *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, fourth ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 190-192.

CHAPTER 5

WOMEN IN EDUCATION

Educational opportunities for most children in the colonies during the early 18th Century in the United States were sparse and typically took place within the home and church. Many children of low socio-economic parents often had no access to a formal education. Children from affluent families were often given access to a tutor for reading and studies in Latin, Law, and Language. If a tutor was not available for the home, some wealthy families would send their sons, such as George Washington, James Madison, James Monroe, and Thomas Jefferson, to a boarding school.[1] Parents were ultimately responsible for providing an education to their sons and if they so chose, they could educate their daughters. However, if a girl received any education outside her home, it was most likely at a dame school, run by older women who brought neighborhood children of both sexes into their homes to teach them a modicum of literacy, as well as simple sewing skills to the girls.[2]

Women were explicitly excluded from the intellectual community, which led to a major literacy gap until well into the late nineteenth century. Prior to the seventeenth century when most people were illiterate, elite families in which sons learned to read and write rarely provided such opportunities for their daughters.[3] In colonial America, writing was a business skill largely reserved for boys, reflected in statistics which suggested that just prior to the American Revolution, 80 percent of men in New England could pen a signature while only half of the women could make the same claim. It has been estimated that 70 percent of the men in Northern cities could read, but only 35 percent of their female counterparts could do so.[4] The dictates of religion, however, necessitated that white children of both sexes be taught to read at least a few Bible verses if nothing else. If they were daughters of traders or other well-placed individuals, girls had an opportunity to be taught how to write or they would otherwise benefit by a brother's education, studying Latin with him, for example. While white children were expected to read the Bible, regardless of gender, children in slavery were denied by law access to instruction in reading and writing lest they learn about alternatives to slavery.[5]

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[1] Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, *American Education: A History*, third ed. (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2004).

[2] Lynn Peril, *College Girls: Bluestockings, Sex Kittens, and Coeds, Then and Now* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006).

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[3] From *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England* (1853), II: 203, *The Old Deluder Act (1647)*, "It being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures."

[4] Smith,724-727.

[5] Ibid.

While women were often excluded from a formal education, there were men of distinction that did care about didactic opportunities for women, although, not until the second half of the nineteenth century were white women admitted to major state universities. According to Roy Honeywell, Jefferson was adamant the new country needed educated leaders. Jefferson’s plan included ways for promising youth, despite their economic status, to climb the educational ladder and have the opportunity to go to college. Honeywell concludes that Jefferson’s plan ultimately only educated the aristocracy beyond the first three years, and did very little to educate females, African Americans and Native Americans. Honeywell describes a study schedule which Jefferson recommended to his daughter, Martha, which included French, Music, and English lessons.[6] This example was interesting, and it allows the researcher to understand that Jefferson was not opposed to women being educated, but does show his lack of confidence or desire to have women leaders in the United States. Ultimately, Jefferson believed that girls should be educated only in basic reading, writing, and domestic affairs. In short, it was reasoned that girls did not need much more than the most rudimentary education because most of them were going to be wives and mothers.[7]

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[6] Roy J. Honeywell, "A Note on the Educational Work of Thomas Jefferson," *History of Education Quarterly* 9 no. Spring (1969): 66.

As women became household leaders, many took the responsibility to educate their sons and daughters in the study of the Bible. Barbara Miller Solomon points out that Bible reading was the wedge by which some young women discovered their intellectual gifts.[8] Yet such study was not meant to lead to independence of thought. When educated Bible-reading Anne Hutchinson began holding weekly meetings in her Boston home to discuss sermons as well as her own theological opinions, retribution from the male establishment was swift: she was excommunicated and banished from the colony along with her family. The family eventually settled in New Amsterdam, where they were killed in a massacre by an unappreciative Native American tribe, the Siwanoy.[9]

Anne Hutchinson was a woman who exemplifies the characteristics of strong educated women in the seventeenth century. Although her plight came to a tragic end, her story contributes to the development of new thoughts on education. The Enlightenment Period influenced education on many levels. There were a tremendous amount of new ideas that provoked momentous changes in nearly every aspect of Western society. Traditional assumptions regarding religion and philosophy were altered in dramatic and profound ways. Sociologist Herbert Spencer was responsible for one of these major religious and philosophical developments of thought. He strongly influenced education in the mid-19th century with his social theories based on Charles Darwin's work in biology. He introduced the idea of Social Darwinism, which applied the theory of evolution in biology, to society, politics, economics, and education. The shift in thinking consequently affected every aspect of the educational system and process, and this included girls having access to an education.[10]

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[7] Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), 24.

[8] Ibid., 25.

[9] Ibid, 27.

Central among the concepts that forged Enlightenment ideology was the belief that Reason, with a capital R, was the only infallible guide to knowledge and would enable humankind to understand Nature. Knowledge that was previously grounded in faith, revelation, or tradition was replaced with knowledge that was developed from empirical evidence and from naturalistic reasoning.[11] A fundamental belief that emerged as a foundation of Enlightenment ideology was the certainty that progress was to be anticipated and that, in time, the perfect, or at least near perfect, society would come into existence. Girls were included in the idea of progress; however, their role was to learn how to be a better wife and mother. Society embraced young girls being educated, certainly learning how to read, so they could share the Bible with their own children.[12]

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[10] Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 164.
[11] Urban and Wagoner.

Slowly, as a result of the Enlightenment period, the idea developed that it was appropriate to educate girls and women if they used their education to further women's traditional roles as wife and mother. In 1572, the Ursuline order of nuns was founded in Italy and charged by a papal bull with the duty "to remedy the ignorance of the children of the people and the corruption of morals."[13] Despite the order's Italian roots, most Ursuline convents were located in France, and in 1727, the Ursuline Academy of New Orleans opened in what was as yet a French colony. This was most likely the first girls' school in the United States, and after almost 280 years of operation, it is most certainly the oldest.[14] The main focus of the curriculum for the school was the catechism, supplemented by instruction in reading, writing, music, fancy needlework, and etiquette.[15] Although women were slowly given access to education, interest in girls' education truly had less to do with literacy than the belief that an educated mother would in turn instruct her children in both religious and secular subjects. Even Abigail Adams's famous request of her statesman husband, John, that he "remember the ladies" when he and the rest of the Continental Congress hammered out what would become the founding documents of the United State fell ultimately on deaf ears. The concept, of what historians Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart termed "Republican Motherhood," charged a mother with the civic duty of instilling these values in her children, and thus required a further commitment to her own education.[16]

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[12] Evans, 42-43.

[13] Peril, 18.

Although the Enlightenment ideas called for freedom of thought, women were still expected to be the moral compass in their families and home. It was believed that a wife and mother needed to set the standard for the behavior for both husband and children, especially male children, the heroes and patriots of the future.[17] Benjamin Rush, a Philadelphia physician, wrote and spoke on the importance of women's education throughout the 1790s. Training the mothers of future citizens was important work indeed. Because promising statesmen learned their first lessons at their mother's knee, basic literacy was not enough for girls, nor was the mere instruction of ornamental accomplishments taught in the French schools, which Rush deemed decadent and elitist. In addition to reading and arithmetic, the French schools' curriculum for girls included fancy needlework and the French language. These schools laid the foundation for the famous "finishing" schools that were popular for girls in the nineteenth century.[18]

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[14] Cheryl Glenn, "Truth, Lies, and Method: Revisiting Feminist Historiography," *College English* 62, no. 3 (2000): 380-382.
[15] Peril, 19-21.
[16] Kerber and DeHart.

Rush, however, suggested that girls should be taught the principles of liberty and government as well as the obligations of patriotism. When the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia opened in 1787, Rush saw his ideas about female education put into action. Although the Young Ladies' Academy represented a new commitment to the education of women, it more closely resembled a modern high school rather than what we would consider a college today.[19] Until it closed in the early 1800s due to an outbreak of yellow fever, its curriculum included reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, and religion. In his 1787 address to visitors at the Academy, Rush revealed both the philosophy behind his thinking about education for women and his view of women's nature and their place in American society. He stated,

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[17] Peril, 23-26.
[18] Janice Monk, "The Women Were Always Welcome at Clark," *Economic Geography* 74, no. (1998): 14-30.

> Female education should be accommodated to the state of society, manners, and government of the country in which it is conducted. This remark leads me at once to add that the education of young ladies in this country should be conducted upon principles very different from what it is in Great Britain and in some respects different from what it was when we were a part of a monarchical empire.[20]

Despite the innovations of the Young Ladies' Academy, as historian Jennifer Manion points out, "It was still widely acceptable for people, including advocates of the formal education of women, to believe in women's fundamental intellectual inferiority."[21]

While ideas about female education were changing, it did not mean that the doors of higher education immediately opened. In 1783, twelve-year-old Lucinda Foote was found to be "fully qualified, except in regard to sex, to be received as a pupil of the freshman class of Yale University."[22] Although she was qualified, she was denied admission. Indeed, a young woman in eighteenth-century New England was more likely to have been taught modern, not classical languages. As John Adams told his daughter, it was "scarcely reputable for young ladies to understand Latin and Greek – French, my dear, French is the language next to English."[23] Latin and Greek were, along with higher mathematics, the foundation of the men's college curriculum, the purview of church and state.[24]

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[19] Jennifer Manion, "The Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia: Attitudes toward the Formal Education of Women in America, 1790-1800," *Penn History Review* Spring, no. (1997): 28-42.

[20] Tom Ewing, "Digital History Project", Virginia Tech History Department http://www.dhr.history.vt.edu/modules/us/mod03_rev/evidence_detail_12.html (accessed October 29 2012).

[21] Manion: 36.

The publication in 1792 of Mary Wollstonecraft's, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, helped move the conversation for women's education forward in the United States. Among other things, Wollstonecraft argued for more educational and professional opportunities for women. She believed opportunities helped single women and widows better support themselves; while at the same time it facilitated married women to be better wives and mothers.[25] Wollstonecraft's ideas were printed in the United States, in *Ladies Magazine*, and created a conversation centered on the idea of women’s education. With the American Revolution and the fight for equality at the forefront of Americans’ minds, women started to experience further educational opportunities.[26] Mary Ann Dzuback argues, “Contentious public debates about women’s rational and moral capacity circulated during the European Enlightenment of the same time that science was emerging as a dominant mode of inquiry.”[27] Disputes about women’s intellectual capabilities emerged in the context of efforts to redefine the rights and privileges of men, of male intellectuals to reasserts male dominance over and control of female access to education.[28] Women continued to press for educational access despite the male hegemony of their opportunities.

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[22] Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 307.
[23] Christie Anne Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1994).
[24] Peril.
[25] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., [1792] 1967).

Beginning in the 1820s, a trio of women opened schools which, while they did not use the name “college,” were institutions that offered girls an education above and beyond that offered by other schools, and provided a blueprint for the women’s colleges that followed.[29] Thirty-some years after Lucinda Foote suffered her disappointment at Yale, Emma Willard was denied permission to sit in on Middlebury College's entrance examinations. She did not want to be a student there; she simply wanted to learn how the college evaluated the education of its male applicants. Knowledge of such methods, she reasoned, would help her create standards for female education, which she found lacking in mathematics and the sciences.[30] When her 1819 *Plan for Improving Female Education* (which, among other things, called for state support of a school for girls) was rejected by the New York legislature, influential citizens of the city of Troy promised their financial support if Willard established a school there. The Troy Female Seminary opened in 1821. With a curriculum that boldly included mathematics and science in addition to more familiar weekly lectures on manners, religion, and the "peculiar duties" of women, the school was a resounding success, and remains a highly regarded girls' prep school today.[31]

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[26] Rosemarie Zagarri, "The Rights of Man and Woman in Post-Revolutionary America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (1998): 206-10.
[27] Mary Ann Dzuback, "Gender and Politics of Knowledge," *History of Education Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (Summer, 2003): 171-175.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Alma Lutz, *Emma Willard: Daughter of Democracy* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1929).

Like Willard, Catharine Beecher believed that both sexes should have access to an education; however Beecher believed that as mothers and teachers, women were entrusted with the most important task of molding the characters of children. She questioned the role of a woman in the United

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

States, and answered with, “Is it not to form immortal minds, and to watch, to nurse, and to rear the bodily system, so fearfully and wonderfully made, and upon the order and regulation of which the health and well-being of the mind so greatly depends?”[32] How many women, Beecher further asked, devoted time and study in the course of their educations to preparation for these duties? In 1823, she and her sister opened the Hartford Female Seminary. Students at Hartford received what Beecher deemed the “most necessary parts of education.”[33] In addition to the domestic training she advocated, this meant a rigorous curriculum of English, rhetoric, logic, philosophy (natural and moral), chemistry, history, Latin, and algebra. Beecher was also an early booster of physical education for girls. Students at the Hartford Female Seminary followed Beecher’s own system of exercise involving weights and music, which she later shared with the public in *Physiology and Calisthenics for Schools and Families* (1856).[34]

Willard demanded that the education of girls and women be treated with serious regard, whereas Beecher advocated for a curriculum that particularly emphasized training for women’s specific duties. At Mount Holyoke Seminary, established in 1837, Mary Lyon provided students with what most closely resembled a collegiate education.[35] With its emphasis on academics in a highly regulated yet homelike setting, Mount Holyoke was a model for Vassar and Wellesley as well as for the female departments of numerous coeducational colleges. Like Beecher, Lyon recognized the importance of physical activity; students were required to walk a mile each day in addition to performing calisthenics. By requiring all students to share in housekeeping chores such as cleaning and washing, the expense of hiring maids was avoided and tuition was kept low.[36] An unexpected consequence of this policy was the misconception that Mount Holyoke students were largely occupied in learning a domestic curriculum. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Mount Holyoke Female Seminary embodied two major innovations in women's education. It instituted rigorous academic entrance requirements and a demanding curriculum conspicuously free of instruction of domestic pursuits. And it was endowed, thus ensuring its permanence and securing the principle of higher learning for future generations of women.[37] The female seminaries at Troy, Hartford, and Mount Holyoke stand out for their rigorous curricula and their lasting influence.

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[32] Catharine Beecher, "Suggestions Respecting Improvement in Education" http://wwwbritannica.com/women/pri/Q00177.html (accessed October 9, 2010).

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

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[35] Kerber and DeHart, 25.
[36] Peril, 110.

Creating opportunities for women to have access to an education was paramount. Linda Eisenmann differentiates between formal schooling and non-formal opportunities. Eisenmann creates an excellent timeline of women's higher educational opportunities when they were refused admission to male institutions. She reflects on the small schools such as Sarah Pierce's academy, which was created with a strong commercial, political, and cultural center in post-Revolutionary America.[38] Eisenmann argued, "The best examples on the collegiate level of potent institutions built to provide basic education are the late nineteenth-century women's colleges eventually known as the Seven Sisters."[39] These include the well-known, influential colleges Mount Holyoke, Vassar, Wellesley, Smith, Bryn Mawr, Barnard, and Radcliffe. Formal education was costly, so most women received a non-formal education. Eisenmann argued that before schooling became widespread and affordable, non-formal education was provided in many different settings. For example, women's magazines offered both recommendations for women's behavior and new models to emulate.

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[37] The Office of Communications, "A Detailed History of Mount Holyoke" http://www.mtholyoke.edu/about/detailed.html.

[38] Linda Eisenmann, "Creating a Framework for Interpreting Us Women's Educational History: Lessons from Historical Lexicography," *History of Education* 30, no. 5 (2001): 453-470.

[39] Ibid., 458.

Historian of women scientists, Margaret Rossiter, contends that the chief advantages of a formal education within these elite colleges seems to have been threefold: 1) their sizeable endowments gave unlimited access to full university resources; 2) their administrations were more nondenominational than secular, which allowed more national and urban clientele, which lead to; 3) an almost feminist commitment to excellence in women's higher education.[40] Rossiter argued that as a result, the elite women's colleges were able to construct college campuses that were impressive.

Within these impressive college campuses, women were expected to behave within a social constraint that was particularly conservative. According to the mores of the time, all students had to be of good Christian character and single. Rossiter states, "Married women were not even considered for employment at the early women's colleges, even, it seems, when they were clearly the best candidate available.”[41] Many marriage policies at elite women’s colleges required resignation or leaving school upon marriage. Male faculty members, on the other hand, were expected to be married. Woodrow Wilson, a newly married professor, was hired for his first teaching position at Bryn Mawr. He disliked teaching women so much that after three short years he left to teach at an all-male university in Connecticut.[42] Bryn Mawr was the only college that hired unmarried men, several of whom eventually found wives on the campus.[43]

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[40] Margaret W. Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

Although many women received a formal education, many were declined opportunities to perform in the workplace. Luckily, in the North, the common school movement of the nineteenth century created a sizable demand for teachers. Horace Mann, as a major advocate for public education, embraced the idea of enlightenment; however he also saw the common school’s role as one that encouraged good moral decisions, as well as to provide an environment for learning.[44] Mann advocated for the common schools, the teaching of broad Christian principles free from narrow sectarian interpretations and close in spirit to the teaching of the Unitarian sect that he had embraced. He supported educating boys and girls from all backgrounds, as he believed that all individuals could benefit from attending school. In fact, he repeatedly emphasized this point in trying to get poor and working class parents to send their children to the common school.[45] Since males were reluctant to fill these positions because of teacher's low status and remuneration, women's opportunities as teachers increased.[46] However, outside of the North, as Eisenmann posits, "even the collegiate institutions that trained women declined to hire them as professors."[47] Out of necessity, throughout the United States, women's colleges became the leading employers of women. Eisenmann argued that at times, women fostered their own institutions in order to generate jobs for themselves. She gives an example that demonstrates this use of institution building for career advancement through Catharine Beecher, who created three schools for women to study home economics. In terms of supporting women's work through job opportunities, she is significant according to Eisenmann, as she led the Board of National Popular Education, a "sort of early placement agency that recruited and trained unmarried women for work as teachers in the American West.”[48]

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[41] Ibid., 15.

[42] Mario R. DiNunzio, ed. *Woodrow Wilson: Essential Writings and Speeches of the Scholar-President* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006).

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

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[45] Ibid.
[46] Farnham.
[47] Eisenmann, 460.

As mentioned earlier, Kerber and De Hart’s term, “Republican Motherhood,” continued to be an ideology that was supported by most men and women throughout the United States in terms of supporting higher education for women. Rossiter argued that by the end of the nineteenth century a great transformation had occurred in women’s education in the United States, informal learning had given way to academies, and they in turn to colleges. She states, “Some colleges had faculties of more than fifty women and offered a mental training as rigorous as that available to men.”[49] The institution of the academy served the cause of women’s education well. It demonstrated their ability to learn advanced subjects and maneuver through rigid curriculum. Farnham states, “The female college did not represent a startling disjuncture, but rather a continuous progression in the slow, upward climb toward equal opportunities between the sexes.[50]

The way Americans have viewed intellectual activity among women tells us a great deal about what they believed to be women’s proper role. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century a slightly higher proportion of girls than boys were attending school, and girls were increasing their lead over boys in the upper age group. College, however, was another matter at the turn of the twentieth century. Carey Thomas, former president of Bryn Mawr, one of several elite women's colleges founded in the latter half of the nineteenth century, argued for why women should be sent to college by their families. She states, "Women scholars can assist women students, as men cannot, to tide over the first discouragements of life of intellectual reunification."[51] Thomas contends that it was the responsibility of women's college presidents to take control of women's education, to "bend ourselves to the task of creating academic conditions favorable for the development of women's creativity."[52] Thus for both religious and secular colleges, the trends all led in one direction and that was toward greater educational opportunities for women.

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Rossiter, 2.
[50] Farnham, 67.

Rossiter claims that everyone "knew" around the late nineteenth century that women were biologically inferior to men and although the "literature" on the subject was vast and seemingly authoritative. Helen Thompson, a graduate student in psychology at the University of Chicago, "fired an opening salvo at the concept in 1898 when she pointed out that the issue had apparently never been put to a valid experimental test."[53] Thompson was one of John Dewey's most brilliant students and he encouraged her to map out the new psychological specialty of sex differences in her dissertation, "Psychological Norms in Men and Women."[54] Her work is important for she found that the men were slightly better at some things (physical strength and manual dexterity) and women were better at others (memory work and sensory perception).[55] Despite slurs and stereotypes, questions about her physical and mental abilities, a teenage girl in the late nineteenth century had more hope than ever before of achieving a higher education. By 1870, Peril states, "Approximately 70 women's colleges and 170 coeducational schools enrolled 11,000 young women, who accounted for 21 percent of all college students. By the turn of the twentieth century, 85,000 women made up 36.8 percent of the student population."[56]

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[51] M. Carey Thomas, *The Future of Women's Higher Education, in Mount Holyoke College: The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary* (South Hadley, Mass: Mount Holyoke College Press, 1913), 104.

[52] Ibid.

In addition to establishing schools, academies, and colleges, there were several groups of women that created institutions to provide economic opportunities. According to Eisenmann, a number of these organizations began advancing social reform agendas. She states, "The most pervasive of women's public causes before 1920 was the suffrage movement, which over many decades drew women and men together in support of women's rights and female voting privileges."[57] One of the most complex purposes of women's institution building, one that arises as their presence strengthens in various settings, is negotiating with the state to formalize roles and responsibilities around issues of social reform. There are many examples of women such as Pauline Agassiz Shaw's support for kindergartens, Alice Paul's organization of the National Woman's Party, and most importantly Jane Addams and her Hull House, all of whom demonstrate the institutional building which Eisenmann claims. According to Barbara Solomon, the Women's Movement in the late nineteenth century expanded suffrage organizations to the growing women's clubs of the post-Civil War Era. She claims, "Literary and cultural leaders likened the activities of their groups to those of women's colleges."[58] Solomon argued that the increased awareness of women's potential impact on social reform led to a strong connection of women's organizations and institutes of higher learning for women.

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[53] Rossiter, 102.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Peril, 51.

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[57] Ibid., 464.

[58] Solomon, 46.

By the 1920s, perceptions of women’s educational abilities began to shift. Feminism had led some to challenge old beliefs about women’s inferiority, the suffrage movement had called forth active campaigns in many states and the nation’s capital, and World War I had utilized some of their skills and talents.[59] Women had finally gained access to higher education within the confines of a bachelor degree program without many constraints placed upon them. The political battle for suffrage took many years with women and men working together, but the 19th amendment was eventually passed in 1920. At this point, after women voted in their first federal election in 1922, many women believed that they were the political equals of men, and the target of their activism shifts, such that women begin to pursue more personal freedoms.[60] An increasing number of women looked to higher education as a result. Evans argued that they were the last generation of women educated in the Victorian world of female social reform networks that had shaped the Progressive movement.[61] The mutual support and understanding which these women could supply to one another, both politically and personally, helps to explain how so many women were able to achieve groundbreaking positions in areas such as aviation.

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[59] Rachel A. Rosenfeld and Kathryn B. Ward, "The Contemporary U. S. Women's Movement: An Empirical Example of Competition Theory," *Sociological Forum* 6, no. 3 (1991): 472-475.
[60] Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1989).
[61] Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

WOMEN IN AVIATION

Women in the United States, like men, have been involved with the technology of flight from its commencement. It is not hard to discover this fact, even if women's experiences are different from those of men. When opening the pages of the earliest aviation publications, one will find pictures and stories of women that have been repeated several times over the past century. So often, in fact, that the question we should ask ourselves is not "Were there any women in aviation?" but rather "Why do we keep forgetting?"[1]

On December 17, 1903, human flight became a reality when Orville Wright piloted the *Wright Flyer* across a 120-foot course above the sands at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. That awe-inspiring twelve seconds of powered flight inaugurated a new era.[2] Unfortunately, this era would take time, risk, and patience for women to participate. However, men continued to push forward with flight and the airplane quickly evolved as a means of transportation, both personally and commercially, as well as a weapon of war. Flying faster, further, and higher, airplanes soon encircled the globe, dramatically altering human perceptions of time and space. Von Hardesty states, “The dream of flight appeared to be without bounds. Having conquered the skies, the heirs of the Wrights eventually orbited the Earth and landed on the Moon.”[3] Aerospace history, though often excluding women from participation, is punctuated with extraordinary feats of heroism and technological advancement. The airplane, as with many other important technological breakthroughs, has provided safe, reliable, and overtime, inexpensive travel for millions. In the formative years of flight, the United States military took an early interest into the possibilities of airplanes.

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[1] Douglas, 10.

[2] Dik Alan Daso, *Hap Arnold and the Evolution of American Airpower* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000).

Orville and Wilbur Wright’s Model B plane was quickly contracted by the United States Army at the request of Henry (Hap) Arnold who was trained as a pilot by the Wright Brothers. Arnold understood the significance of the airplane in future warfare and strongly suggested that the United States move quickly to establish an air program.[4] By 1911, many Americans saw promise for great things in the future of aviation. Some predicted this future would belong to everyone. That year, L. Frank Baum, author of the bestselling *Wizard of Oz*, published a novel called *The Flying Girl*. Baum believed that women were destined to make a place for themselves in the sky, and he hoped young female readers would be inspired to emulate his heroine's daring aerial feats.[5] The book's introduction observed, "The American girl…already recognizes her competence to operate successfully any aircraft that a man can manage…In America thousands of girls are ambitious to become aviators."[6] Although fiction was being written with women in mind, the reality would be very different. Men, women, boys, and girls were enthralled with the idea of flying, especially with the idea of the barnstormers. Quite a few barnstormers were female. One was a black woman named Bessie Coleman. When she was refused a license in the United States, Coleman earned hers in France, and returned to America to perform, the color of her skin suddenly a novelty and a draw.[7] There was also Phoebe Hargrave and her flying circus. Hargrave performed double-parachute jumps in which she cut loose the first chute, free-fell for several seconds, and then opened a second chute which carried her to the ground safely. On summer nights, Katherine Stinson would put lights on the wingtips of her plane and perform aerobatics in the dark. And then there was Mabel Cody, Queen of the Air. Cody would dangle from the plane's spreader bar with one hand, and transfer from one plane to another.[8]

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[3] Ibid., 17.

[4] Joseph J. Corn, "Making Flying "Thinkable": Women Pilots and the Selling of Aviation, 1927-1940," *American Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (1979): 561-564.

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[5] Haynsworth and Tommey, 10-15.
[6] Ibid., 8.
[7] Ibid., 15-18.

Crowds paid money to watch barnstormers walk on the wing of the plane to retrieve a handkerchief, while dangling from the landing gear, or exchanging cockpits with another flier at 1,000 feet. They would rig the biplane with smoke devices and staged mock dogfights which were almost as dangerous as real ones. For the barnstormer, flying was not magic; it had become scientific, as well as very technical. The field of aviation was thrilling, but very expensive. During the 1920s, few businessmen were willing to invest in an industry so young and risky. It was not until Charles A. Lindbergh took off from New York in May of 1927, flew 33 hours alone across the Atlantic Ocean and landed in Paris, did businessmen decide that aviation had a place in their investment portfolios.[9]

Lindbergh became a hero overnight and his heroic compatriots of the air gave the American frontier a new dimension. Young Americans were worshipping a new breed of heroes. As Keil states, "These modern heroes had all the qualities of legendary ones who braved the unknown, alone.

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[8] Ibid., 21.

[9] Douglas, 22-26.

But the heroes of the air symbolized the new century."[10] They had a unique combination of gallantry-of-old and mastery of the new technology. Modern technology not only created their heroics, but also put their fame on film; these heroes had higher public visibility than any before them. And as airmail and passenger routes began to connect America's towns and cities, Keil contends that "the daily hum of an engine seems to sing, you can be up here, too!"[11] The twentieth-century redefined heroism. Those impossible feats of a long-distance solo flight demanded courage not of brute strength and the struggle of mortal combat, according to Keil, but rather of a refined intellectual mastery, endurance, and spirit.[12] One of the greatest aspects of the aviation hero was that it was available to women.

When Charles Lindbergh flew the *Spirit of St. Louis* over Niagara Falls on his way to Dayton to salute Orville Wright, among the cheering crowd was a little girl, six-year-old Marion Hanrahan. In 1935, Hanrahan, then fourteen, would cut her school classes and sneak down to Bendix Field so she could patch airplane wings to earn her flying lessons. According to Keil, the flying community was still so small that the world's most famous woman aviator, Amelia Earhart, a frequent visitor to Bendix Field, would sit leisurely giving the teenager flying tips.[13]

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[10] Sally Van Wagenen Keil, *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines: The Unknown Heroines of World War II* (New York: Four Directions Press, 1990), 16.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 17-19.

In the 1920s, thousands of American girls who witnessed Mabel Cody or Katherine Stinson or Bessie Coleman fly their planes never looked at the sky the same way again. Many of them would try to imagine flying, and some of them determined that they would. Flying was hardly a typical ambition for a woman, but the social climate seemed to favor women who wanted to break the mold. Americans during the 1920s had become attracted to the idea of the rebellious, nonconformist woman. It was the era of the flapper, the bold, independent woman whose boyishly slim figure had modified her rejection of traditional femininity, and the New Woman, who was impressively clever and competent. With unprecedented numbers, women were entering professions such as law, medicine, business, and the sciences that had traditionally been reserved for men. Leslie Haynsworth and David Toomey argue, "In some ways the aviatrix was the perfect icon of the 'new' femininity. She was the flapper and the career woman rolled into one: a wild adventuress and a serious, skilled master of a challenging profession."[14]

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[13] Ibid.

Even those growing up during the 1920s and 1930s that the barnstormers did not touch, however, could not avoid the excitement of a world being changed by aviation. Keil states, "As a child in Jamestown, North Dakota, Vivian Gilchrist would grab the newest adventure books from the boys' section of the public library, featuring the daring exploits of Don Sturdy and Tom Swift, and climb into her favorite tree to read."[15] One November day in 1928, Betty Huyler, a nurse, read an article written by Amelia Earhart in *Cosmopolitan* entitled, "Try Flying Yourself." Huyler was convinced this article was written for her and she raced down to Roosevelt Field, Lindbergh's departure point for Paris the year before and signed up for flying lessons. Just after she had earned her pilot's license, she was offered a fly job at Curtiss-Wright Corporation's aviation center on Long Island to demonstrate for flight school customers flying curricula and a new trainer airplane called the American Moth.[16]

In November 1929, Huyler and several women pilots from the New York area decided it was time for an organization.

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[14] Haynsworth and Tommey, 23.
[15] Keil, 15.
[16] Ibid.

On November 2nd, over twenty licensed women pilots arrived for a meeting at Curtis Airport. According to Keil, among them was Huyler's inspiration, Amelia Earhart. High on the order of business was choosing the name of the organization. All the names they could think of: "Lady Birds," "Homing Pigeons," "Angels' Club," all sounded straight out of a Will Rogers' press report during the first all-women air derby held that year.[17] Finally, Earhart interrupted the discussion and suggested that the name should be the number of the charter members. A letter was sent out to announce the formation of a women pilots group and Ninety-nine women pilots across the country responded, and so Earhart's suggestion was used and the organization was named the Ninety-Nines. Today the organization enjoys a membership of over 7,000 women worldwide.[18] Earhart was elected the group's first president. Here, indeed, is an example of the network activities identified by Eisenmann and others, activities central in education for the advancement of women.

Before Earhart was a famous pilot she excelled in many areas of her life. After high school, she went to post-secondary school in Philadelphia at one of the most exclusive finishing schools in the country, a school called

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[17] Haynsworth and Tommey, 26-30.

[18] Douglas, 31-33.

Ogontz. It was important to the headmaster of the school, Miss Abby Sutherland that the teachers travel abroad during the summer to encourage cultural growth so the knowledge could be shared with the female students. According to Susan Butler, the result of all this was that Ogontz did a very good job of educating the girls, as more than half of its students went on to institutions of higher learning, and many of those institutions gave college credit for Ogontz courses. Ogontz students became singers at the Metropolitan Opera, heads of civic organizations, doctors, lawyers, State Department officials, teachers, and artists. But being a wife and mother came first; it was a rare Ogontz girl who did not marry. Of course, Earhart would marry, but much later in her life than most of her classmates.[19]

The physical well-being of the girls at Ogontz was considered to be just as important as their mental health, and therefore vigorous exercise was an integral part of the school day. Butler describes how the fitness program was structured, "Fencing was taught by a fencing instructor from the Drexel Institute, field hockey by an English lady who coached at Bryn Mawr, and dancing by Martha Graham. The horseback riding program ended with a horse show each

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[19] Susan Butler, *East to the Dawn: The Life of Amelia Earhart* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 1997), 76-81.

June."[20] Earhart immediately excelled at field hockey and as a result of her prowess; she was invited to become a member of one of the secret societies, Alpha Phi, the athletic sorority. As she came closer to graduation she began to look at newspapers and magazines for articles on women who had careers. It was 1917 and women still did not have the right to vote. Earhart was very much concerned with Women's Suffrage and she was only focused on women of high achievement.[21]

When Earhart had spare time, she headed for the stables, and it was through her riding that she got her first exposure to airplanes. She was riding a horse named Dynamite, whom she had "gentled" with a combination of horsemanship and apples, when she was joined by three Air Force officers. They were so impressed by how well she controlled her horse, as he was famous for bucking off a colonel, that they asked her to go out to Armour Heights, an airfield at the edge of town, to watch how they controlled their planes. She was hooked. She was not allowed to go up and fly due to Army regulations, but she knew one day she would fly.[22]

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[20] Ibid., 77.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

Earhart became a nurse and decided after the great influenza outbreak in 1919 that she wanted to become a doctor. She was accepted, in the fall of that same year, at Columbia University in the University Extension Program. Butler states,

> In the fall of 1919, swelled by the great postwar rush, the Extension was in a state of flux – 12,873 students were by far the largest student unit at the university, completely dwarfing the undergraduate Columbia College enrollment of 1,001, the Barnard enrollment of 755 girls, and the 6,548 students enrolled in the existing graduate and professional schools.[23]

The Extension teaching staff ranged from the pedestrian to the extraordinary. Among the famous professors in the program were Rexford Tugwell, who was teaching economics; Raymond Moley, government; Franz Boas, anthropology; and Thomas Merton, English. The science department boasted a Nobel Prize winner; the philosopher John Dewey and the journalist Heywood Broun were also on the staff.[24]

As with everything she did, Earhart excelled at Columbia. She maintained a B+ average after her first year and suddenly quit. She gave many reasonable answers as to why she quit, but none was true. The truth as Butler describes,

> In fact it was her parents who suddenly derailed her. Amelia was on the receiving end of what she described

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[23] Ibid., 88.

[24] Ibid.

> as “pleadings” from her mother and father to come live with them in Los Angeles. It was not a free choice. In the 1920s, young unmarried women still did what their parents wanted. Amelia felt obligated and went, albeit unwillingly.[25]

She still intended to pursue a career in medical research and planned to enroll in a college in Los Angeles in the fall. But that never happened, as aviation once again grabbed her attention and she was not turning back.

Flying a plane was not at all a safe proposition in the early 1920s, things often went wrong. The Curtiss Jenny and the Canuck were among the safest planes flying, which was the reason the United States and Canada had extensively used them as training planes during the recent war. But they were far from safe; the Curtiss handbook that accompanied each new plane worriedly advised fliers to never forget that the engine may stop at any time and to keep this in mind. That summer of 1920, when Earhart moved to Los Angeles, Laura Bromwell, the most famous American female pilot at the time, got into her plane for the last time. She was performing loop-the-loops for a crowd when her plane halfway through a loop fell to the ground crushing her to death. A few weeks later, Owen Locklear, dubbed the greatest daredevil of all fliers, was doing an aerial stunt for a movie when his plane went into a tailspin and he crashed in the middle of Hollywood.[26] Butler argues that the danger was part of the fascination for Earhart learning to fly.

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[25] Ibid., 90-91.

By 1935, Earhart had flown solo across the Atlantic, and had become the first pilot (male or female) to make a solo trip from Hawaii to the American mainland, the first nonstop from California to Mexico City, and the first to fly nonstop from Mexico City to New York. She was considered one of the best pilots in the world. In the 1930s, while women pilots competed against each other in all female air races, few women participated in the most prestigious races like the MacRobertson and the Bendix. In fact, with the exception of Amelia Earhart, those women who tried to sign up for these races often met resistance. Such was the case when Jacqueline Cochran decided to enter the 1935 Bendix. In 1933, a woman contestant in the Bendix had been killed, and the race's officials declared that they would not be responsible for more female lives.[27] When Earhart heard Cochran was being denied access, she decided to enter herself and the Bendix officials allowed both women to enter. There is no doubt that Earhart challenged gender expectations and aviation history. When she decided to fly around the world on July 2, 1937, she secured a place in history forever. When word had reached the White House in Washington that she had not arrived at Howland Island in the Pacific Ocean, President Roosevelt ordered the largest search in United States naval history. He mobilized a battleship, four destroyers, a minesweeper and the aircraft carrier Lexington, which immediately set out from California for the central Pacific with fifty-seven airplanes on deck.[28] For two weeks, ships and airplanes searched 250,000 square miles of the Pacific. With no luck, the search ended at the end of the month. At a memorial for Earhart, her friend, Jackie Cochran, the future leader of the WASPs gave a speech and said,

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[26] Ibid.
[27] Haynsworth and Tommey, 32-35.

> If her last flight was into eternity, one can mourn her loss but not regret her effort. Amelia did not lose, for her last flight was endless. Like in a relay race of progress she had merely placed the torch in the hands of others to carry on to the next goal and from there on and on forever.[29]

It was Amelia Earhart who opened the skies for many female pilots in the 1930s. It was because of her that many young women followed their reverie to becoming a pilot. This dream led many to answer the call when the United States Army Airforce needed ferrying pilots when World War II began.

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[28] Keil, 38-40.

[29] Ibid., 42.

Women’s experiences varied tremendously from men’s experiences in the workforce, the field of aviation, and the military. The achievements of over one thousand female pilots may be lost in the collective conscience of the American people, but their successes cannot be forgotten. The mere fact that women were able to break the gender barrier in the cockpit is a success in its own right. Unlike the 1920s, the 1940s were not a time of women’s liberation. However, World War II proved to be a fertile ground for women to grow and challenge the status quo. In the 1930s, before the United States entered World War II, several famous women proposed that the United States incorporate women pilots into their pilot pool; among them were famous aviator Amelia Earhart and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Examining the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s in some detail illustrates the opportunities and challenges for women in the United States.

CHAPTER 7

SHIFTING ROLES OF WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

Perhaps the new freedoms and new attitudes of the 1920s represented a necessary experimentation with individualism, especially on the part of young women. Changes in public life in the twenties accompanied the disintegration of the Victorian female community and the incorporation of women into the individualistic culture of a consumer economy. Sara Evans argued,

> The separate spheres of public and private were no longer so separate as women visibly worked and played in public places and as they refashioned domesticity into the 'public' roles of professionalized social work, nursing, teaching, and white collar clerical work.[1]

Although women's opportunities in the workforce were increasing in the 1920s, so was the discrimination and ridicule they experienced from society as a whole.

Many Progressive reformers, many of whom were women, fought to defeat political reforms like the Equal Rights Amendment legislation. Evans explains that opponents of the Sheppard-Towner bill, such as Senator James Reed of Missouri, ridiculed as "unnatural" the unmarried, professional women employees of the Children's Bureau.[2] The Sheppard-Towner bill was the result of women reformers who argued that high infant mortality rates could be lowered by educating mothers in prenatal and early childhood nutrition, sanitation, and child care practices.[3]

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[1] Evans, 15-18.

[2] Ibid.

In the early twentieth century, rising higher education for women, coupled with shattered family fortunes in the South and increased consumption in the North and West, led more middle-class women to enter the job market. Although these wives needed someone to care for their home and family, fewer women felt compelled to live in as domestic workers. By the 1920s, most such workers were older women who lived in their own homes, worked by day, and supported dependents.[4] Domestic work remained a low-status job and became identified with women of color, whose concentration in domestic work increased as African-American, Mexican-American, and Native American women migrated to urban centers and white women moved into other occupations.[5] In 1920, 46 percent of African-American women workers were domestic workers; in 1930, 53 percent; and in 1940, 60 percent. Even when industrial and clerical jobs opened up further during World War II, it was mostly white women who increasingly escaped domestic work so much that by 1944, black women made up over 60 percent of all domestic workers in the United States.[6] This disparity was also reflected in the racial composition of female pilots of the time, as very few black women had a license to fly.

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[3] Ibid.

[4] William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America since World War II*, sixth ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 174-182.

[5] Maureen Honey, "The Working-Class Woman and Recruitment Propaganda During World War II: Class Differences in the Portrayal of War Work," *Signs* 8, no. 4 (1983): 672-687.

Although the 1920s allowed women to gain freedom, independence, and suffrage, the ensuing decade economically created a desperate situation for all Americans. The era of good feeling ended somewhat abruptly in 1929, when the stock market crashed. Prosperity vanished almost overnight, and very quickly, gender roles tightened. Many people blamed the crash on the loose morals of the previous decade, and with the employment crisis, too many laborers with too few jobs, seemed to dictate a return to the "natural" roles. The natural roles assumed men would once again be the head of the economic household. At the height of the depression, 33 percent of the labor force was out of work. This meant vast economic hardships, which lasted for years, creating crises for most Americans.[7] There was an emotional calamity, as well, especially as men had been traditionally defined by working and providing food, clothing and housing for his family, but was unable to find a job. As a result, many states enacted laws to privilege men over women in regard to employment. Women were dismissed or let go from their line of work. Indeed many states had laws mandating that if men were available, women could not legally work, or if a woman’s husband worked, she could not.[8]

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[6] Kerber and DeHart, 17-18.
[7] Ibid.

The idea of women being equally entitled to labor, or supplanting men in labor, became an idea that was dismissed. These restrictive laws were the response to the national crisis. While gender roles became more traditional within families and at the local and state levels, there were some changes toward equality at the federal level. Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR), as President, was believed by many to be the salvation of the nation through his New Deal work programs; he was also a humanitarian, as was his wife, Eleanor. Together they opposed racism and advocated women’s advancement in politics and social welfare. Under FDR, the first female federal judge, Florence Allen, was appointed, and Frances Perkins became the first female Secretary of Labor.[9] The President, in effect, was admitting that women could be in important decision-making positions, even in a time when most work was slotted for men. Women’s educational experiences were now being utilized by the Roosevelt administration. Evans states, “Female reformers had already laid the groundwork for a new concept of social responsibility for the poor and the unemployed; now a small but critical network of professionals and activists was in a position to bring their ideas to bear on the emerging shape of the welfare state."[10] With the support of Eleanor Roosevelt, an exceptional group of women with a common perspective built on a shared history and long-term friendships to attain highly influential positions.

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[8] Peril, 24-27.
[9] Kerber and DeHart, 19-23.

The Great Depression of the 1930s crippled industry and left 20 percent of the labor force unemployed. In 1932, after the Hoover administration had failed to produce recovery, voters turned to FDR and the Democrats. Promising a "new deal" at a time when people were homeless and starving, Roosevelt launched a program of economic recovery and reform, much of it improvised, not all of it successful, and some of it far less radical and extensive than many critics had wished.[11] The result, however, was that in its efforts to cope with economic disaster, the Roosevelt administration redefined the responsibility of the federal government to its citizens. Relief and work programs were provided, unemployment compensation and minimum wage and hour legislation passed, old-age pensions introduced, individual savings accounts began, insured farm prices were supported, and rural houses were electrified. The welfare state had arrived.[12]

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[10] Evans, 205.

[11] Ibid.

High unemployment rates among white men forced many of their wives to enter the labor market for the first time in the 1930s. Black men experienced even higher rates of joblessness, thus causing their wives to stay in the work force, despite declining wages and deteriorating working conditions. During the Great Depression, most black women maintained an unstable hold on employment; their positions as family breadwinners depended upon, in the words of one social worker, "the breath of chance, to say nothing of the winds of economic change."[13] Jacqueline Jones argued that unemployment statistics for the 1930s can be misleading because they do not reveal the impact of a shifting occupational structure on job options for women. The relatively high rate of black females' participation in the labor force obscures the highly temporary and degrading nature of their work experiences. Most of these women could find only seasonal or part-time employment; racial and sexual discrimination deprived them of a living wage no matter how hard they labored; and they endured a degree and type of workplace exploitation for which the mere fact of having a job could not compensate.[14] Various pieces of legislation through the new deal by Roosevelt, most notably the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, exempted women from their provisions. Jones states, "In essence, no more than 10 percent of gainfully employed black women derived any direct benefit from the new federal policies related to minimum wages, maximum hours, unemployment compensation, and social security."[15]

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[12] Chafe, 162-165.

[13] Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York, NY: Basic Books Inc, 1985), 38.

Despite the rapid decline in a wide variety of indicators related to production and economic growth in the early 1930s, and despite the sluggishness of the pre-1941 recovery period, the numbers and kinds of job opportunities for white women expanded, as did their need to help supplement household income. The clerical sector grew, as it had in the 1920s, and would continue to do so in the 1940s, and in the process attracted more and more women into the work force and employed a larger proportion of all white women workers. Linda Kerber and De Hart state, "The percentage of white women who were gainful workers steadily increased throughout the period 1920 to 1940 from 21.3 to 24.1 percent of all adult females."[16]

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., 407.

[16] Kerber and DeHart, 138.

As the nation, struggling with an economic depression began to fight its second world war, unemployment lines quickly vanished. Manpower shortages meant that women would once again move into jobs in industry and experience new vocational opportunities with a lessening of discrimination based on marital status, age, and race, and public praise for their wartime contributions as workers.[17] Conversion to war production involved redefinition of the entire employment structure. Some civilian automobile production jobs were also necessary for the production of tanks, aircraft, and engines.[18] The changeover to war production in electrical manufacturing was less dramatic, but also involved shifts in the character and distribution of jobs. Thus, many of the war jobs that had to be filled were not clearly labeled as “women’s” or “men’s” work, at least not at first.[19]

Women were not evenly distributed through the various jobs available in the war plants, but were hired into specific classifications that management deemed suitable for women. Thus were excluded from other jobs. Kerber and De Hart argued that although data on the distribution of women through job classifications in the wartime auto and electrical industries are sketchy, there is no mistaking the persistence of segregation by sex.[20] Job segregation by sex was explicitly acknowledged in many war plants as jobs were labeled "male" and "female." The two largest electrical firms, General Electric and Westinghouse, continued this practice until the end of the war. Whatever the sexual division of labor happened to be at a given point in time, management always seemed to insist that there was no alternative. When a War Department representative visited an airplane plant where large numbers of women were employed, he was told that the best welder in the plant was a woman. The representative realized that plants allowing women to do "men's" work, like welding, found women to be extremely capable.[21]

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Smith: 723-747.

[19] Mady Wechsler Segal, "Women's Military Roles Cross-Nationally: Past, Present, and Future," *Gender and Society* 9, no. 6 (1995): 760.

In order to entice women to enter the workforce at the start of the Second World War, the United States government initiated a propaganda campaign. The government promoted the fictional character of "Rosie the Riveter" as the ideal woman worker: loyal, efficient, patriotic, and pretty. A song, "Rosie the Riveter," became very popular in 1942. Norman Rockwell's image on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* on May 29, 1943 was the first widely publicized pictorial "Rosie."[22] This led to many other "Rosie" images and women to represent that image. For example, the media found Rose Hicker of Eastern Aircraft Company in Tarrytown, New York and pictured her with her partner as they drove in a record number of rivets into the wing of a Grunman "Avenger" Bomber on June 8, 1943. Rose was an instant media success.[23] In many other locations and situations around the country, "Rosies" were found and used in the propaganda effort. A few months after Rockewell's image, the most famous image of Rosie appeared in the government-commissioned poster "We Can Do It."[24]

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[20] Kerber and DeHart, 138-140.

[21] Ibid.

Women responded to the call to work differently depending on age, race, class, marital status, and number of children. Half of the women who took war jobs were minority and lower-class women who were already in the workforce. They switched from lower-paying traditionally female jobs to higher-paying factory jobs. But even more women were needed, so companies recruited women just graduating from high school. Eventually it became evident that married women were needed even though no one wanted them to work, especially if they had young children. It was hard to recruit married women because even if they wanted to work, many of their husbands did not approve.[25] Initially, women with children under 14 were encouraged to stay home to care for their families. The government feared that a rise in working mothers would lead to a rise in juvenile delinquency. Eventually, the demands of the labor market were so severe that even women with children under 6 years old took jobs.[26]

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[22] Yellin, 115-118.

[23] Melissa Dabakis, "Gendered Labor: Norman Rockwell's Rosie the Riveter and the Discourses of Wartime Womanhood," in *Gender and American History since 1890*, ed. Barbara Melosh(London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), 245-248.

[24] Yellin, 117-119.

While patriotism did influence women, economic incentives ultimately convinced them to work. Once at work, they discovered the nonmaterial benefits of working like learning new skills, contributing to the public good, and proving themselves in jobs once thought of as only men's work.[27] When the United States entered the war, 12 million women (one quarter of the workforce) were already working and by the end of the war, the number was up to 18 million (one third of the workforce). While in due course 3 million women worked in war plants, the majority of women who worked during World War II worked in traditionally female occupations, such as the service sector. Most women worked in tedious and poorly paid jobs in order to free men to take better paying jobs or to join the service. The only area that there was a true mixing of the sexes was in semiskilled and unskilled blue-collar work in factories.[28] Traditionally female clerical positions were able to maintain their numbers and recruit new women. These jobs were attractive because the hours were shorter, were white-collar, had better job security, had competitive wages, and were less physically strenuous and dirty. The demand for clerical workers was so great that it exceeded the supply.[29]

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[25] Ibid.
[26] Honey: 675-679.
[27] Yellin, 135-138.

Like men, women would quit their jobs if they were unhappy with their pay, location, or environment. Unlike men, women suffered from the "double shift" of work and caring for the family and home. During the war, working mothers had childcare problems and the public sometimes blamed them for the rise in juvenile delinquency. In reality, though, 90% of mothers were home at any given time. The majority of women thought that they could best serve the war effort by staying at home.[30] During the war, the average family on the home front had a housewife and a working husband.[31]

When women started working at traditionally male jobs the biggest problem was changing men's attitudes. When women started to work in traditionally male jobs, men resisted and often harassed the new women workers. At first, employers were hesitant to hire women, but they realized that with only minor modifications to the workplace they could utilize a large labor pool. The male employees had a deeper and more sustained resistance, however. Many men feared that women's cheap labor would replace them or lower their wages and most believed that a woman's place was in the home.[32] Some men, though, accepted that the war effort needed women workers.[33] Women were brought into skilled labor quickly, upsetting the male employees. They also resented the special labor laws for women like longer rest periods, more desirable shifts, and newer restroom facilities.[34] Men often played tricks on women by sending them for tools that did not exist. Men also sexually harassed women by whistling and cat-calling to them as they worked. Most of the resistance and hostility towards women workers disappeared as the novelty of women workers wore off, the labor shortage got worse, and women proved themselves.[35]

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[28] D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 305-308.
[29] Yellin, 140.
[30] Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, 310-311.
[31] Yellin, 141-143.

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, 312-315.

[34] Susan M Hartman, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston, Massachusetts: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 24-29.

[35] Yellin, 146-148.

Unions varied in their attitudes toward women workers. Some unions welcomed women, but only for the duration of the war. Other unions did not trust women because they feared that they might take men's jobs after the war. Women depended on male leadership to safeguard their interests since their representation in power was not reflective of their membership.[36] After the war, many unions that had allowed women members eliminated their position or returned the position to the male she replaced.[37]

In general, unions only helped women to the extent that it safeguarded the pay, seniority, and other labor standards of their male membership.[38] Unions wanted to make sure that those safeguards remained when men returned to their jobs. For instance, when women took over male jobs, unions advocated for equal pay for women because it prevented employers from undercutting future wages for men by hiring women at a lower wage. However, unions did not fight for equal pay for women when their position would not be utilized by men.[39]

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[36] Hartman, 32.

[37] Ibid., 35-38.

[38] Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (New York, New York: Barkley Books, 2001), 201-204.

[39] Ibid., 210.

Male employees and male-controlled unions were suspicious of women. Companies saw women's needs and desires on the job as secondary to men's, so they were not taken seriously or given much attention.[40] In addition, employers denied women positions of power excluding them from the decision-making process of the company. Women wanted to be treated like the male workers and not given special consideration just because they were women.

While the image of the woman worker was important during the war, the prewar image of women as wives and mothers by no means disappeared. Mainstream society accepted temporary changes brought about by a war, but considered them undesirable on a permanent basis. The general public continued to remind women that their greatest asset to society was their ability to take care of their homes.[41] Many women pushed on this ideal and forged ahead into a new realm of work.

World War II changed many people's minds about the potential role of women in the workforce, the military during Second World War, like some factories, allowed women into a few men's positions of work. Women that ventured into these positions helped chart new territory and future possibilities for many women to follow.

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[40] Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, 316-318.
[41] Anderson, 46-48.

CHAPTER 8

WOMEN IN THE MILITARY, WOMEN’S WORK, DISCRIMINATION, AND THE WASP PROGRAM

The military in the United States has a long history of discriminating against women, from lack of acceptance to the types of jobs in which women were given access. Many leaders in Congress and the military believed that there should be no permanent positions for women in the workplace and especially none in the armed forces, particularly when the United States was not at war.[1] The first known woman to participate openly in the military in the United States was Margaret Corbin. During the American Revolution, she served with her husband at Fort Washington in New York. Corbin participated in the defense of Fort Washington during the British attack in 1776. When her husband was wounded, she continued firing his cannon. During the battle, she was seriously wounded and disabled for the remainder of her life.[2] Most women who served in the military did so in the capacity of secretaries and nurses.

The most common role for women on the battlefield has been as a nurse. During the American Revolution, ten nurses were assigned to care for every one hundred men who had been wounded.[3] Thousands of nurses also served in the Civil War. Clara Barton, for example, left her job in the United States Patent Office to organize a service that brought medical supplies to the Union Army. In addition, she trained a group of nurses to treat the wounded in hospitals and on the battlefield, nearly losing her own life at the Battle of Antietam in 1862. Barton became the founder of the American Red Cross, and President Abraham Lincoln called her the "Angel of the Battlefield."[4] Soon after the Civil War, the U.S. Military banned women as nurses on the battlefield, leaving women to only serve behind the front lines. As with most rule changes, necessity required the utilization of female nurses once again in the 1898 Spanish-American War. There were simply not enough men to care for all the casualties. All of the nurses, through the Spanish-American War, were civilians and not a part of the U.S. Army or Navy. Finally, in 1901, the Nurse Corps was established as an auxiliary to the Army, and in 1908, a Navy Nurse Corps was created.[5] The Nurse Corps saw their roles expand as the United States entered World War I. Over ten thousand nurses were sent to Europe to care for wounded American troops.

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[1] Richard Worth, *Women in Combat: The Battle for Equality* (Springfield, NJ: Enslow Publishers, Inc., 1999), 222-225.
[2] Ibid., 231.

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[3] Ibid., 235.
[4] Ibid., 237.
[5] Ibid.

As the reality of war emerged, other options for employment opened up to women. The most powerful, immediate effects of the attack on Pearl Harbor and Roosevelt’s call for a Declaration of War were the surge of patriotism and the creation of new jobs. Well-schooled in voluntary activities, women responded in massive numbers to the social needs of wartime society. Three million women volunteered with the Red Cross, while others drove ambulances and spotted airplanes for the Civil Defense.[6] Labor shortages were seen throughout the country and especially within the military. As a result and out of pure necessity of war, women were accepted into the United States Army and Navy. They were received in the military mainly in the capacity of nurses, secretaries, or other service oriented roles. According to Debra Douglas, the Navy exhibited considerably greater foresight than the Army by drawing on the academic world for assistance with the “Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service,” also known as the WAVES.[7] Professors and administrators from several prominent women’s colleges were members of an advisory council that were instrumental in setting up the basic administrative structure of the WAVES program. In fact, the first director of the program was Mildred McAfee, the president of Wellesley College.[8] Close to three hundred fifty thousand women served in these various branches and an additional thousand flew commercial and air force transport planes for the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP).[9]

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[6] Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union," 321-323.

[7] Douglas, 78-82.

Molly Merryman examines the recruitment of female pilots leading up to the Second World War. She states, “During World War I, several female aviators volunteered their services to the Army Air Corps as military pilots but were turned down.”[10] In the 1930s, before the United States entered World War II, several famous women proposed that the United States incorporate women pilots into their pilot pool; among them were Amelia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt. These women were friends and were excited about the possibility that women could participate in the military at some point in the near future. Although Earhart’s fate changed in 1937 with her disappearance, Roosevelt carried the idea forward and was joined in the endeavor by Nancy Love Harkness and Jackie Cochran, both of whom shared a love for flying and a desire to see women utilized as pilots in the military.[11] Harkness and Cochran both believed that women pilots would be needed to ferry planes to and from military bases, which would free male pilots to prepare for combat. In a Memorandum dated August 25, 1941, General Hap Arnold wrote: "The use of women pilots serves no military purpose."[12] This in part was due to the fact that when the United States entered the war in December 1941, there were still more pilots than planes.[13] Although General Arnold did not see a need for women's services in August of 1941, the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor would soon change his mind.[14]

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[8] Ibid, 85.

[9] Nancy Goldman, "The Changing Role of Women in the Armed Forces," *The American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 4 (1973): 898-904.

[10] Merryman, 17.

With the influence of Roosevelt, Harkness, and Cochran, Arnold sought to incorporate women into the Army Air Force. He saw the potential benefits of women ferrying planes and the possibility of them serving in other piloting capacities. Arnold was aware of Great Britain and the Soviet Union's use of women as pilots in their military and the remarkable job these women had done.[15] According to Douglas, "Arnold could not have expected, much less desired, the circumstance that resulted in the simultaneous creation of two groups of women pilots: the women's

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[11] Douglas, 141-144.
[12] Ibid., 145.
[13] Merryman, 214-216.
[14] Haynsworth and Tommey, 248-250.
[15] Douglas, 148-149.

Auxiliary Ferry Squadron (WAFS) and the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD)."[16] Harkness would become the leader of the WAFS, while Cochran took command of the WFTD. Harkness and Cochran had two very different ideas of how their units should operate. Harkness wanted her program to be an elite corps of women flyers which called for women to pass a more rigorous set of requirements than the male candidates. The highest standard for the female candidates would require 500 hours of flight time verses the male requirement of 200 hours.[17] Harkness also wanted her program of female pilots to be strictly for ferrying operations and most important she wanted the women to remain civilians.[18]

Cochran's plan called for pilots to be used for ambulance, courier, and transport which would release more men for war than just ferrying planes. Originally her plan called for 200 hours of flight time for the female pilots. The most important difference in Cochran's plan was the desire for women pilots to become part of the military rather than remain civilians. She wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt, according to Doris Rich, and declared that "the nations of Europe had already recognized the potential of women fliers and national defense…I don’t think it is public opinion that must be touched but rather official Washington, especially the military.”[19] Cochran did not create the plan she was proposing to Mrs. Roosevelt. It came from Mrs. Theodore “Teddy” Kenyon, a member of the Ninety-Nines in May of 1936. The Ninety-Nines was an International Women Pilots Association created by ninety-nine female pilots, whose first president was Amelia Earhart.[20] Many of the women Cochran hoped to recruit for the WFTD were already pilots and members of the Ninety-Nines (Cochran would later become president of this organization).

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[16] Ibid., 152.
[17] Ibid., 155-159.
[18] Ibid., 162.

In 1941, 2,100 American women had pilot’s licenses, a number that increased to 3,000 by 1943. Many of these women obtained their licenses through Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP) schools. The CPTP was established as a civilian program but its potential for national defense was undisguised. The program started early in 1939, with the government paying for a 72-hour ground school course followed by 35 to 50 hours of flight instruction at facilities located near eleven colleges and universities. It was a success and provided a grand vision for its supporters to greatly expand the nation's civilian pilot

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[19] Doris L. Rich, *Jackie Cochran: Pilot in the Fast Lane* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2007), 27.
[20] Douglas, 164.

population by training thousands of college students to fly.[21] The Army's proposal met with stiff resistance. Just two weeks after the *American Aviation Daily* article appeared, 83 companies with a vested interest in general aviation organized the National Aviation Training Association (NATA). The NATA members recognized that, if left unchallenged, the Army plan would, for all practical purposes, ban private aircraft from the nation's skies. The NATA and other aviation interests dulled the Army's bid with an effective lobbying campaign in Congress. Their actions not only saved the CPTP, they may have saved the entire general aviation industry in the United States.[22] The result was a revitalized CPTP and an expansion of its curriculum to a larger segment of the nation's colleges and universities. At the program's peak, 1,132 educational institutions and 1,460 flight schools were participating in the CPTP. Institutions such as Georgia Institute of Technology, Pomona Junior College, San Jose State Teachers College, University of Denver, and most notably, the Tuskegee Institute, all included the CPTP in their curricula.[23] The inclusion of Tuskegee Institute in the ranks of CPTP participants, along with Hampton Institute, Virginia State University, and Howard University, helped open the doors for the first African-American male military pilots. The onset of World War II and political pressure combined to compel the U.S. Army Air Corps to employ African-Americans as officers and pilots with the majority of graduates coming out of the CPTP.[24]

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[21] Ibid., 166.

[22] Maryann Bucknum Brinley, *Jackie Cochran: The Story of the Greatest Woman Pilot in Aviation History* (New York: Bantum Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1987), 14-16.

Marion Stegeman Hodgson was trained in the CPTP in the spring of 1941 at the University of Georgia were she was a senior majoring in journalism.[25] The U.S. government collaborated with educational institutions around the country to create a pilot training program in the event the U.S. entered the war. The University of Georgia created an opportunity for both women and men to join the pilot program. Military discrimination within the CPTP, allowed for only one woman to every ten men to be accepted into the program.[26] Hodgson remembered there being five women in her program and that the University never opened the program to women after the initial five were trained.[27] The CPTP did, fortuitously, train thousands of women in the United States to be pilots, many in connection with their college or university and this enabled them to answer the call when the government needed civilian pilots.

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[23] Douglas, 167. Women were generally admitted into the CPTP at the ratio of one woman to ten men. However, several women's colleges did take part in the CPTP, thereby increasing the total number of female participants. These schools included: Lake Erie College, Adelphi College, Mills College, and Florida State College for Women.

[24] Rickman, 34-37.

[25] Marion Stegeman Hodgson, *Winning My Wings* (Albany, TX: Bright Sky Press, 1996), 19-24.

[26] Rickman, 39-43.

In July of 1941, Cochran returned to the states from Great Britain, in the midst of arranging the 25 U.S. women to fly for the Royal Air Force to ferry planes throughout their country. Once back in the states, she met with Assistant Secretary of War for Air, Robert M. Lovett. She discussed her plan for an organization of women pilots within the U.S. Army Air Corps (AAC). Lovett gave her permission to research the files of the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) for licensed women pilots in the United States. Searching over 300,000 files at the CAA, she located the records of 2,733 women pilots, 150 of whom had well over two hundred hours of flight time, which gave them a commercial rating.[28] There was no way to know what type of airplanes these women had experience flying, or if they had cross-country experience. To the 150 women with over two hundred hours, she sent a questionnaire which asked: how many hours currently logged, what planes, where, and whether they would be willing to fly for the

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[27] Hodgson, 28.
[28] Keil, 102-104.

United States in the event the country went to war. Keil adds, "Within two weeks, she had received responses from 130 of the 150 commercially rated pilots who stated that they were not only willing but enthusiastic about the prospect of flying for the Army Air Corps."[29]

Harkness and Cochran's proposals to the AAC were both initially rejected by the U.S. government. Arnold knew that all-women's unit would not be formed unless a dire need was created by war. He recommended to Harkness and Cochran that they encourage women with a pilot's license to apply to the new Civil Defense Agency Civil Air Patrol of New York, created by New York City's air minded Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia.[30] At the time, the Civil Air Patrol throughout the country was recruiting women, but not to fly. If a female volunteer happened to be a pilot, the commander of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) viewed her as one with an ability, "to work, to organize, and to take orders."[31] Nevertheless, within the role of a CAP volunteer, many female pilots were given the opportunity to fly. According to Keil, over 2,000 women were flying for the CAP by mid-1942.[32]

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[29] Ibid., 106.
[30] Ibid., 108-109.
[31] Ibid., 110.
[32] Ibid., 112-114.

On December 7, 1941, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States was instantly transformed and the minds of the generals in the Army Air Corps where challenged. It took Pearl Harbor to move Congress to bring the Women's Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) to the floor, eight months after it was introduced. Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers of Lowell, Massachusetts, had introduced House Resolution (H.R.) 4906 on May 28, 1941, to establish a women's corps as an auxiliary to the Army.[33] She was determined that women who performed jobs for the military during wartime should receive the same benefits as the men in uniform. During World War I, she had observed that American women working for the military received no compensation of any kind in the event they were sick or injured, as many were. A full year after Rogers introduced the bill, she finally got her resolution passed in May 1942 and Oveta Culp Hobby was named WAAC director.[34]

It was also at this time that the Army Air Corps' name was changed to the Army Air Forces (AAF), which emphasized the importance of the air power in the new conflict.[35] The AAF decided to move forward with the idea of using women to fly military plans. Cochran, at this point, was back in

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[33] Rickman, 38-40.
[34] Ibid., 42.
[35] Douglas, 78.

Great Britain when she discovered that Harkness had been given the opportunity to begin the program.[36] Cochran was furious, but could only write letters of disappointment and betrayal. By June 1942, the AAF had an official women's auxiliary. The unit would quickly transition from the WAACs to the WAFS and Nancy Love Harkness was appointed the director.[37]

Once back in the United States, Cochran met with Arnold to discuss the new program directed by Harkness. She wanted to know how the WAFS were created when Arnold had promised her that she would be in control of women's unit if it ever came to fruition. According to Keil, Arnold stated, "He had asked the Air Transport Command to prepare plans to study and approve. Instead, the Command had gone over his head and right to the Secretary of War with the Project."[38] "Arnold quickly contacted General George, Air Transport Command Head, and arranged for the program to be divided in half. Cochran would be over one half and Harkness over the other half.

There were two immediate needs of the Army Air Force. The first was the need of pilots to ferry planes to and from bases around the United States and from manufacturing plants to these same bases. The second was the need for a flight training program.[39] So, General George was given the task from Arnold to draft a plan that included both needs and to divide the leadership between Cochran and Love. George created a plan that suggested the Air Transport Command (ATC) employ Love to lead approximately fifty experienced women ferry pilots to begin work immediately. While at the same time, Cochran would begin plans to create a training program that would train women to join the ferrying unit after completion of the program.[40] Cochran's program was called the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD), while Love's unit was called the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS). There was no love lost between these two women and Cochran was determined to combine both women's groups and take full control.[41] Cochran was quoted as saying, "Yes, I've been called back by Arnold to be head of a women's air corps in this country. Our goal is 1,500."[42] Fewer hours would be required in the future, she went on to say. "I've had such success with my girls in England that I know this will work."[43] Learning of this plan, Colonel Tunner was angry.[44] Cochran's flamboyant behavior had created a stir with the military. With Arnold on Cochran's side, Tunner knew he had to be careful with how he pressed forward.

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[36] Ibid., 79.
[37] Rich, 14.
[38] Keil, 117.

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[39] Douglas, 81.
[40] Rickman, 85-86.
[41] Douglas, 82-84.
[42] Rickman, 85.
[43] Ibid., 86.

According to Douglas, "Cochran's success in playing hardball politics came at a cost. She had alienated the people and organizations who should have been her most important allies: Love, the ATC, and the WAC."[45] According to Sarah Rickman, hardball was not what the Army brass had expected, instead, they were used to dealing with a different kind of women, as was borne out by those individuals who had already been appointed to the various women's military corps being formed. Rickman states, "Hobby, the commander of the WAAC was the wife of a former Texas governor. She also was a well-known newspaper and radio executive. Mildred McAfee, selected to head the WAVES, was a former president of Wellesley College."[46] Then there was Dorothy Stratton, who left her post as Dean of Women at Purdue University in 1942 to join the WAVES. Soon after, she was appointed director and captain of the Coast Guard Women's Reserve.[47] Jeanne Holm, who enlisted in the WACs and, after WWII, rose to the rank of Major General in the U.S. Air Force, wrote, "The best thing these women had going for them were their backgrounds and personal qualities – experience with women, basic intelligence, and ability to get along with people."[48] Rickman argued that Nancy Love fit right into this group. Jackie Cochran did not.[49]

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[44] Brinley, 83-86.
[45] Douglas, 52.
[46] Rickman, 87.
[47] Major General Jeanne Holm, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution* (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1992).

Nancy Love's motivation to continue leading the WAFS centered on her own personal desire to fly military aircraft. She was content to lead the small squadron of fifty female pilots, as long as she could continue to fly herself. Jackie Cochran, on the other hand, very much wanted control and power over the women's corps. Love was more concerned with mastering the power of the plane, not the program. She loved the freedom and power she felt controlling a machine thousands of feet above the earth. Iris Cummings Critchell, WASP Class 43-2 (the 43 is the year of graduation from training school and the 2 signifies the second unit of 43 to graduate), who majored in aeronautical engineering and learning to fly in college, describes it this way, "Flying and the mastery of flight was a physical and technical challenge. I loved learning each different airplane, its systems and characteristics, and to learn to fly it well."[50] It was the challenge and the art of mastery that Love cherished. Rickman claimed, "Love discovered that power and that freedom early. She had found a way to both use and enjoy it, and she was going to fight for it. But the struggle to keep the WAFS concept intact and to keep Cochran from seizing power over both units did affect Love adversely."[51] Love in fact, could not keep Cochran's taking control of the WAFS. On August 5, 1943, the two units were combined to create the WASP program.[52] Although Love's group was performing at a high level, Cochran was able to convince Arnold that the Ferrying Division, led by Love, should employ only those women who had graduated from the Women's Flying Training school in Texas, led by Cochran.[53] On January 25, 1943, Arnold's office got the message to Love, and Cochran got her wish.[54] With several events culminating, Tunner being reassigned, Cochran utilizing her position with Arnold, and the war escalating, the Army Air Force decided to combine the two female units, naming them the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs). Cochran would be the overall commander of the WASP, while Love would remain the leader of the Ferrying Division, now under the umbrella of the WASP Program.[55]

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[48] Ibid., 51.
[49] Rickman, 88.

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[50] Iris Cummings Critchell email to Sarah Rickman.
[51] Rickman, 89.
[52] Brinley, 36-38.
[53] Merryman, 12-13.
[54] Rickman, 88.

Yellin argued the WASP program arose from the Army Air Force's (AAF's) need, during World War II, to place all qualified male pilots overseas or in combat positions. Arnold and General H.L. George approved the WASP program as a "top secret project that was not initially publicized and was not submitted for militarization until enough experience had been obtained to determine the usefulness of the women pilots."[56] Yellin recognized the impact of Jacqueline Cochran, commander of the WASP unity, and Nancy Love, leader of the Women's Auxiliary Ferry Squadron, for their advocacy to gain access to the military for the female pilots.[57]

By the time World War II began, many women were anxious to help in the war effort. One WASP, Katherine (Kaddy) Landry Steele, recalled, "World War II was different, it was a situation that welded us all together; men, women, and children, from all the different countries; and soon it was such a big thing, and to be a part of something that big, that important, that really set the world on the course that it later followed, it was pretty important."[58] Many female trainees gave up lucrative jobs to begin WASP training, and sold their homes and businesses on the gamble that they would pass training and become WASPs. Unfortunately, the trainees immediately experienced the discrimination of income as compared to their male counterparts. Women were given a salary of $250 a month, while men, for the exact same work, received $300 a month.[59]

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[55] Ibid., 89.
[56] Yellin, 159.
[57] Ibid., 161.

The backgrounds and experiences of the pilots who joined the WASP program varied substantially. Merryman notes, "The WASPs were women from all walks of life and all economic levels in the United States, but they had one thing in common, and that was the love of flying."[60] Their shared experience is one that is constructed in multiple meanings of gender, power, and success. In order to comprehend the story of female aviators, it is essential to understand the gender constructs of their time and how these socially constructed mechanisms influenced their collective and individual experiences.

When considering the issues of gender disposability and discrimination, Emily Yellen describes the inequity when a WASP member died during a service mission. Mentioned earlier in this paper, Yellen tells the death of

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[58] Merryman, 14.
[59] Rickman, 90.
[60] Merryman, 20.

Cornelia Fort. She states, "Not only did the Army not pay for the transport of her body, or her burial, or give her family a flag to drape on her coffin, but her parents were given no gold star to signify the loss of their child in military service while the male pilot's body was sent home to be buried with honors."[61] Why were these women of war seen as disposable as and of less value than men? Melissa Wright states, "Everyday, around the world, women who work in the third world factories of global firms face the idea that they are disposable."[62] I argue that the WASPs were seen by the hegemonic powers as a group that was disposable physically and emotionally. Wright argued that there is a myth surrounding third world women and their ability to perform in the work place. I extend this myth to the female aviators of Second World War. Wright states, "I regard the myth as a tool of interpellation, in the sense intended by Louis Althusser (1971), since it establishes the expectations both for identifying disposable third world women within specific populations and for determining how these subjects, so identified, should behave in relations to those who do the identifying."[63] Struggles over hegemonic power occur when there are shifts in the distribution of power, control, and ideological understanding. In America, during World War II, a number of these shifts occurred. The activities of women, racial minorities, and lower-class individuals were more visible than during peacetime, and their contributions to the war effort were publically recognized as valuable. Merryman argues, "As the status and power of women in America began to shift, attempts were made by the dominant male power structure to conserve and defend the previously existing system, a construction of national identity that had already been weakened by the experiences of the Great Depression."[64] Merryman contends that as the likelihood of victory for the United States and its Allies increased so too did attacks against female participants in the war effort. The work of women in factories and in the military was criticized, and women were let go from their jobs to make room for returning male servicemen. The WASPs became an important target in the effort to maintain hegemonic control over the sexes.[65] This example of disposability is similar to Wright's argument of third world women when she states, "No one may be identical to the disposable third world woman, but through the detailing of this myth, we are meant to learn something about real women who work in real factories and who embody the tangible elements of disposability within their being."[66]

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[61] Yellin, 159.

[62] Phillip S. Meilinger, "Establishing the U.S. Air Force Academy: The Early Years," *Air Power History* Two, no. Summer 2009 (2009): 1-16.

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[63] Ibid., 5.
[64] Merryman, 158.
[65] Ibid., 160-162.

World War II set the stage for women to be used in a manner that highlighted their disposability for the Army despite their level of education and training. Women were often given jobs that were deemed as women's work or menial positions. Once females were given access to military aircrafts, women were being measured as disposable. The WASP unit was disbanded after twenty-one months of service to the United States Army without military benefits. As stated before, gender was the crucial point of the WASP program and women accepted into WASP training already had to be proven pilots. The required hours of flight time were continually reduced as the need increased for pilots. Male trainees, however, did not have to have pilot's licenses or any flight experience whatsoever to be accepted in the AAF's pilot training program.[67] The WASP pilots had to demonstrate, more so than men, that they in fact were excellent pilots and in doing so they challenged the artificial construction of gender performances.[68] I argue the discrimination they faced was not about the WASPs as pilots but about women who were going beyond culturally constructed normative boundaries of how women were expected to act.[69] One former WASP, Lorraine Rodgers, remembered that some WASPs experienced incidents of bias from men who refused to acknowledge their ability. She personally felt some distrust and lack of support from men who would not admit that so small a woman could competently pilot a plane.[70]

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[66] Meilinger: 5.

[67] Douglas, 82-85.

In the fall of 1943, many male pilots refused to fly the B-26 "Super Fortress." This aircraft was often referred to as the widow-maker, the flying coffin, and or the deathtrap.[71] Many men had died trying to fly the 2,200-horsepowered machine and they argued it was too difficult because it required instrument flying, which meant constant second-to-second monitoring of the gyroscope, altimeter, and airspeed of the aircraft.[72] In 1942, Senator Harry Truman observed that "more B-26 pilots were being killed in training flights than in combat."[73] After an investigation into the safety of the plane, the Army finally acknowledged that the problem was not the mechanics of the plane, but merely the confidence of the male pilots. Jackie Cochran, saw an excellent opportunity to demonstrate just how good her female pilots could be. Cochran hand-selected four female pilots to train on the B-26 at the all-male flight school in Dodge City, Kansas. The women had been separated from the male pilots, as Cochran did not want the men to deter the women from training on the the B-26. This decision proved to be a good one.[74]

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[68] Merryman, 160-162.
[69] Ibid., 164.
[70] Kathleen Cornelsen, "Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II: Exploring Military Aviation, Encountering. Discrimination, and Exchanging Traditional Roles in Service to America," *Journal of Women's History* 17, no. 4 (2005): 112.
[71] Merryman, 165.
[72] Douglas, 86.

In the ground school, the women outscored the men in all areas: the mechanical system, the electrical system, the hydraulic system, and the emergency system. When the male pilots learned about the results they were in disbelief. The WASPs average grade on the procedures course was 77.8, while the men's average was 74.6. Major John Todd sent a letter to Cochran which read, "All WASPs may well be proud of the high margin of superiority demonstrated in this, the most important ground school course."[75]

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[73] Haynsworth and Tommey, 215-217.
[74] Merryman, 95-98.
[75] Ibid., 98.

Cochran was not satisfied with simply outperforming the men in the classroom. She wanted to prove that women could fly the B-26 with precision. One afternoon at a training airfield in Texas, Cochran arranged for a demonstration. All the students, both male and female, were called onto the flight line to watch an air show involving two B-26s. They stood there and watched these twin B-26s bank and climb and fly chandelles and lazy eights, maneuvers difficult even in a smaller training aircraft. Sometimes the two planes were only a few feet apart. It was a kind of precision flying the students had never seen. Then the planes landed. The two B-26s, wingtip to wingtip, taxied right up to the students. The engines were shut down, and the props slowed and stopped. The students were impressed and applauded. The figures of the pilots and copilots visible in the cockpits disappeared, and underneath each plane in the nose wheel a figure jumped down onto the tarmac. Then a second and soon four of them came out from behind the wheel assemblies into the sunlight and. . . they were women. There were four women standing on the tarmac in front of the two B-26s, and the photograph shows them smiling.[76]

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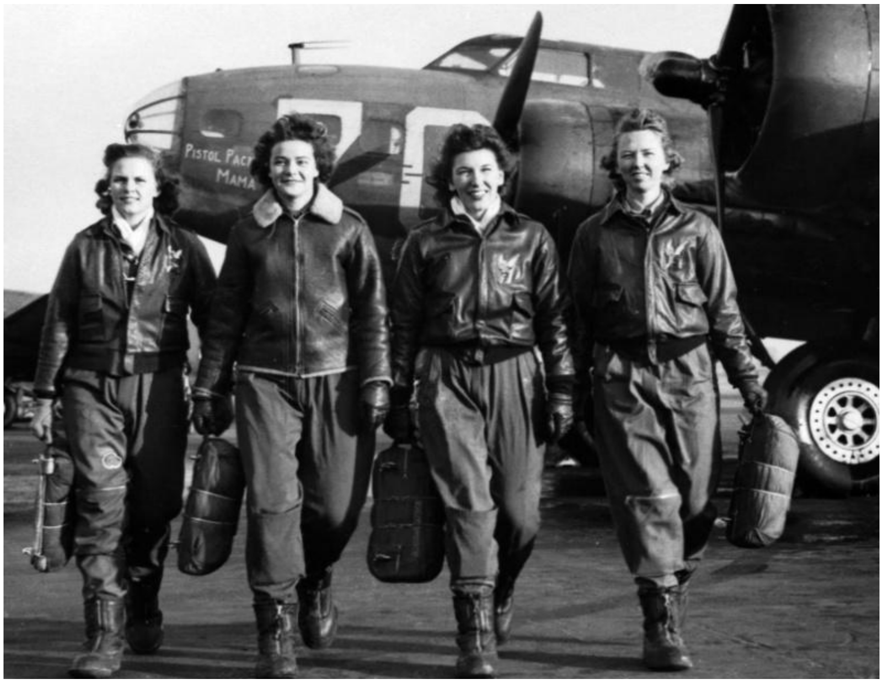
[76] Douglas, 100-103.



Four WASP returning from their B-26 flight
Courtesy of Texas Women's University, Denton, TX

While the photograph may or may not have been taken at the end of that flight, actually capturing their delight—there are of course, many staged photographs, especially in times of war—it is a reasonable expectation that they were delighted.

As a result, women were used to shame men into performing a task that "any" woman could accomplish. Dorothy Schaffter argued that the women who were trained for employment in military aviation were entering a field which was new for both men and women. She makes the case that women did not suffer discrimination any more in the military than they did in the social constructs of everyday life outside of the military.[77] Women were expected to maintain social order and status quo on gender relations. The WASP broke the gender barrier in the air, and Schaffter viewed the program as a purely experimental unit, but was successful and useful for as long as it was needed by the U.S. military. She states, “As an experiment, it was of sufficient scope and duration to answer basic questions determining whether this new occupation has possibilities for women not only in war but in peace.”[78] Schaffter wrote this report in 1947 for the Commission on Implications of Armed Services Educational Programs. As a member of the military, I argue that her analysis must be pragmatic and unemotional as a military expectation concerning the results of the WASPs; she could not project her views on the program, though there is no way to know what her sentiments truly were.

I disagree with Schaffter’s account that women did not suffer discrimination any more in the military than they did in the social constructs of everyday life outside of the military. Two of the worst discrimination stories against the WASPs occurred at Camp Davis in North Carolina when Mabel Rawlinson and Betty Taylor lost their lives at the hands of suspected sabotage of their planes by male mechanics. One mechanic, allegedly, left a rag in the engine, causing it to fail in mid-air, thus crashing and killing the female pilot. The other incident ruled a "sticky throttle," was truly thought to be the result of a mechanic pouring sugar into the gas tank. Both crashes occurred on the base at Camp Davis.[79] Gail Gutierrez argues, "Accidents only encouraged the negative attitude toward these women pilots. Any crash involving a WASP seemed to further convince their detractors that women were not capable pilots."[80] Men, in contrast to Schaffter's point, did not have to endure this type of scrutiny or prejudice.

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[77] Dorothy Schaffter, "Educational Implications of Women's Military Training," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 251, no. (1947): 157-164.
[78] Ibid., 160-161.

In another incident at Camp Davis, the Commander, Colonel Stevenson was upset with the large number of WASPs assigned to his base, a total of 52 female pilots, whereas most bases only had 8-12 WASPs. In his anger, he refused to allow the WASPs to fly and assigned them instead to administrative duty. The women were livid with his decision and were grounded until Cochran flew to Camp Davis and demanded their immediate return to flight.[81]

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[79] Gail M. Gutierrez, "The Sting of Discrimination: Women Airforce Service Pilots," *Journal of the West* XXXV no. No. 1 (1996): 20.
[80] Ibid., 20.
[81] David A. Stallman, "Target-Towing Wasp at Camp Davis," *SOUNDS* Fall (2005): 15-16.

WASPs not only faced discrimination in the military from the men they worked with side-by-side, they also faced discrimination from men and women in public, and sadly, sometimes their own family members. While on leave, Pearl Judd said she watched her Aunt cross the street, to avoid meeting her and having to speak.[82] The WASPs were not highly publicized, Cochran's idea, so the public was not as aware of their existence as they were of the other branches of military women. Often times, WASPs in uniform were thought to be airline stewardesses. Aside from a few articles in magazines such as *Time*, *Life*, or *Newsweek*, little was known about the WASP program. As a result, when four WASPs were grounded by inclement weather in Americus, Georgia, they were stopped by the local police because women were not allowed on the street at night in slacks. They were challenged by the local police for being prostitutes. With great difficulty, they finally convinced the police that they were pilots in the military. However, the police then accused the women of impersonating a military officer. The pilots were taken to the station for booking and their air base called. The women were left in jail until 2:00 a.m. when they were finally given permission to call Nancy Love. In a state of fury, with the injustice of the situation,

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[82] Gutierrez: 21.

Love confronted the sheriff, and the women were immediately released.[83]

Women’s military roles are socially constructed and public policy, norms, and women’s behavior are shaped, at least in part, by public discourse.[84] Segal states, “There are some interesting examples of social construction of women’s military roles, including several where women performing functions that are considered military in other societies are labeled civilian.”[85] Military leaders, such as Cochran and Arnold, who wanted to have female pilots overcome existing prejudices understood that the quality of a woman’s work had to equal or exceed that of her male counterpart.[86] In partial contrast, Douglas argues, “Discrimination in the armed forces based on gender has lessened somewhat by the end of the war.”[87] Women aviators in the United States suffered social constraints that kept them from gaining equity within the Army Air Force and maintained their status as a civilian until 1977.

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[83] Keil, 237-238.
[84] Merryman, 28-31.
[85] Segal: 769.
[86] Douglas, 102-103.
[87] Ibid., 104.

CHAPTER 9

MILITARIZATION OF THE WASP PROGRAM

From the inception of the first program for female pilots (WAAC), militarization was an issue. The majority of WASPs wanted to military benefits from their work in the program. They deserved recognition and protection for their performance and their sacrifice for the war effort on behalf of the United States. During the height of the program, the media was typically positive when reporting on the WASP program. In July, 1943, *Life* magazine ran a cover story on WASP trainee, arguably the most widely read positive piece on the WASPs to appear during World War II.[1]

By 1944, the tide of the war had turned in favor of the Allies. The tide that brought women into the factories and munitions plants, into a multitude of jobs formerly filled by men, and most certainly that brought women into the military and into the cockpits of military airplanes, had turned as well. The WASPs were caught in a strange storm of men returning to "their" jobs and society wanting to return to normalcy.[2] Advertising representation of women in the military also changed sharply in 1944. The encouragement for women to join the military was replaced by the suggestion that women return to the home and take care of their husbands.[3]

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[1] Merryman, 32-34.
[2] Douglas, 104-106.

By 1944, media support and public opinion were turning away from all-out war efforts and were focusing instead on efforts to return the United States to an idealized prewar style of living. It was assumed that the war was won, and interest now focused on the postwar economy, particularly in jobs for returning servicemen.[4] At war factories, women were being laid off in record numbers, and popular media, movies, and books advocated the return of women to their "rightful places" in support of men.[5] Merryman argues, "This is the cultural context within which the issue of women piloting military planes would be debated not only in Congress, but also in the media."[6] Most bills submitted through Congress were to create militarized units of women's auxiliaries had met with limited opposition in the media. Bills authorizing all other auxiliaries were brought to Congress in 1942 and 1943, when the media generally supported increases in the military. Merryman contends, "In 1944, when the AAF brought the WASP Militarization Bill before Congress, two major obstacles existed: Congress was more concerned with cutting military costs than with creating new programs, and there were thousands of returning military male pilots who wanted the flying position held by the WASPs."[7] It would be the second obstacle that would draw public attention to the actions of Congress.

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[3] Merryman, 63-64.
[4] Rickman, 180-181.
[5] Chester Gregory, *Women in Defense Work During World War II: An Analysis of the Labor Problem and Women's Rights* (New York, NY: Exposition, 1974), 28.
[6] Merryman, 62.

The Committee on the Civil Service of the House of Representatives, led by Robert J. Ramspeck, a Georgia Congressman and a former deputy U.S. Marshal, launched an investigation of the WASP program.[8] The WASPs were still under the Civil Service, not the military; therefore public funds, not military funds, were being spent on their program, which Congress knew next to nothing. Nancy Love was asked to give a deposition for the investigation. She did so on April 16, 1944. Her conversation was with a Colonel McCormick and a Mr. Shillito, investigators for the Ramspeck Committee in Washington, D.C.[9] She was questioned on why the female pilots would want militarization and she stated, "'A civilian girl going into a modification [military] center to pick up an airplane is open to suspicion as a spy. Also, compensation and insurance for the families would then be available to them.'"[10]

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[7] Ibid., 63.
[8] Ibid., 64.
[9] Ibid., 66-69.

While the bill for WASP militarization was still being examined at the committee level in Congress, the male civilian pilots that had been laid off and were subject to the draft into the walking army, began to organize a congressional lobby to target the WASP bill.[11] As the congressional lobby effort began, a negative media campaign started in newspapers and in magazines. The article "Army Passes Up Jobless Pilots to Train WASPs: Prefers Women to Older, Experienced Flyers," began: "With 5,000 experienced airplane pilots looking for jobs as a result of the liquidation of the civil aeronautics commission's pilot training, the government is training more than 1,000 young women, at an estimated cost of 6 million dollars, as ferry pilots for the army."[12] The article claimed that most of the former CAA pilots felt "that the WASP training program should be stopped and experienced men pilots given the ferrying jobs."[13] One article, "Lay That Airplane Down, Babe, Cry Grounded He-Man Pilots," had an accurate focus and strongly predicted what was in store for the WASPs:

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[10] Rickman, 182.
[11] Merryman, 72-73.
[12] "Army Passes up Jobless Pilots to Train Wasps: Prefers Women to Older, Experienced Pilots," *Chicago Tribune Press Service*, February 11, 1944.
[13] Ibid.

> The battle of the sexes has reached such proportions that mail from outraged males is piling high on congressional desks. The Ramspeck Civil Service Investigating Committee is considering an inquiry which some observers at the Capitol consider inevitable. Supporters of the ladies, seeing the handwriting on the wall, are moving heaven and earth to get thru the Costello bill that will move the winged women from Civil Service, and give them Army status and a firmer grip on their jobs… "The taxpayers we do bleed easily," said one disgruntled male. "Costs $7000 to train every female. It's the most expensive way to ferry planes." "If the girls were patriotic they'd resign," declared another. "Doesn't make sense," sighed one baffled by it all. "Especially when General Arnold says the Army has pilots running out of it ears." Chances are, say Capitol observers that the men won't go down without a fight on the floor, waged by male members who think it's time for the ladies to holler "uncle."[14]

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[14] "Lay That Airplane Down, Babe, Cry Grounded He-Man Pilots," *Washington Daily News*, March 31, 1944, C4.

As a result of the pressure applied by male pilots, the Ramspeck Committee examined the WASP program to decide whether to continue training women while thousands of experienced man pilots were looking for jobs.[15] The investigation was highly publicized in newspapers and magazines. Merryman stated, "When the committee reported that too much money was being spend on WASP training and suggest it be discontinued, the press immediately seized on and exaggerated the results."[16] One newspaper reported that officers involved with the CAA were using public planes and funds to solicit signatures from CAA pilot instructors to present to Congress:

> Fifty Army planes carrying high-ranking officers are winging their way around the country on a whirlwind mission that may give the court thousands of well-trained male fliers for victory in the battle of the sexes over the right to fly Army planes on non-combat duty, it was learned today.
>
> If the ladies win, it is pointed out, men fliers will have a new interpretation of "victory through air power." And in any case the Army code of "an officer and a gentleman" will have

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[15] Douglas, 104.
[16] Merryman, 65.

> been stretched to the point of gallantry that costs the taxpayers a pretty penny.
>
> Officers of the Flying Instructor Board, appointed by the Army Air Forces Training Command, are interviewing at training centers throughout the country flying instructors of the Enlisted Reserve Corps-Civil Aeronautics Administration War Training Service to get their signatures on a document that says in effect they will be satisfied by whatever jobs they are given.[17]

While the WASPs were being attacked and investigated, they were forbidden from speaking with the media or publicly discussing the bill before Congress.[18] "In the last twelve to fourteen months of our service in World War II, an edict came down from headquarters that there was to be no publicity and no media interviews or anything about the WASPs or by the WASPs," said WASP Madge Rutherford Minton.[19] According to Merryman, the media silence from the WASPs during this time of crisis was itself newsworthy, and the blame for the ban was put, not on the War Department's Bureau of Public Relations, which actually developed the ban, but squarely on the shoulders of WASP director Cochran:

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[17] "50 Army Planes Speed Signatures of Caa Fliers to Head Off Bill," *Washington Daily News*, April 26, 1944.

[18] Merryman. Newspaper articles continued to perpetuate rumors and spread incorrect information about the WASPs program. One such article began: "Reliable information from Washington indicates the WASPs are in a nose dive from which they will not recover," other headings stated, "Not Created by Congress," and "Scores Are Killed."

[19] Madge Rutherford Minton, "Women Who Flew," (Texas Women's University Video Archives 1994).

> Miss Jacqueline Cochran, head of the WASPs, has jealously guarded her flying women from the wrong kind of publicity.
>
> According to an air force spokesman the nationally known aviatrix feels that "glamorizing" is the worst hazard a woman flyer has to meet.
>
> Before Miss Cochran's women flying detachment was merged into the WASPs its head had already decided that publicity for women flyers with the accent on women was "out." She had already discovered that the camera-men simply would not behave and that feature writers refused to take the proper slant on women in the air.
>
> The photographers invariably picked out the best looking girls to photograph to the discomfiture of the less photogenic of the girls with flying ambitions while the feature writers took a perverse attitude that flying was an

> unusual accomplishment for women and that sex should be underlined in any recital of the accomplishment of any aviatrix.
>
> This, according to Miss Cochran's spokesman, was a false notion which must be gradually dispelled from the public mind. Because of these strong convictions on the equality of opportunity for the sexes Miss Cochran has refused to allow her organization to be advertised as a woman's auxiliary and there has been the minimum of pictures featuring the cadets of the women air force pilots.[20]

The negative publicity against the WASPs continued by attacking the female pilots claiming they were excessively glamorous, and allegations arose that their uniforms were costing taxpayers more than five hundred dollars each and were created by "Fifth Avenue" designers as part of the "glamorous excess of the corps."[21] After reading one article that claimed the WASPs were excessively glamorous, Mrs. G.W. Featherhoff, mother of WASP pilot, Nancy Featherhoff, wrote to the editor of the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*:

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[20] Helen Lombard, "Flying Women Guarded from Wrong Publicity," *Times*, April 24, 1944, 167.
[21] Merryman, 68.

> I have been reading with much interest the articles on the WASPs, and their so-called glamour. I have a daughter in the WASPs and if the life she leads comes under the head of glamour, Mr. Webster is dead wrong in his definition of the word. They fly from sun up to sun down every day, check in a hotel at night too tired to even see a movie, and even if they were inclined to do a little night life they have nothing but their flying suits to wear. Imagine spreading glamour in a bulky jacket, wrinkled slacks, helmets and maybe a decorative parachute for extra appeal. They live in barracks. Need I go into detail about this luxurious setting?...
>
> These girls were asked by their government to do this job and they are doing their very best. They are intensely interested in their work, eager to serve wherever they are needed and deeply grateful that they have been given this opportunity to fly.[22]

A common denominator among articles criticizing the WASP program was that women pilots had overstepped their reason for being created and were replacing men rather than releasing them for duty. One article quoted Representative O’Konski as charging that the AAF was squandering money by training the WASPs when “5,000 trained flight instructors were being ‘thrown into the street.’”[23] One article even stated that WASPs were not just replacing men, but were actually preventing men from obtaining the combat training they needed: “One P-38 pilot unwilling to be named, complained that there was no room for his squadron, due in England for combat duty in nine weeks, at a southern field for much needed advanced instrument training because a WASP contingent was on hand for a six weeks’ course to prepare them as instrument instructors.”[24]

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[22] G.W. Featherhoff, "Explaining the Wasps: To the Editor," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 10, 1944, B2.

The media had constructed women in the military as supplemental (following the War Department and Congressional Directives that defined women participants in the armed forces not as soldiers but as auxiliaries to soldiers).[25] When full mobilization of soldiers and citizens had been called for, the media supported the involvement of these women. However, this support was guarded and constructed within gendered notions. With war reaching its end, media opinion about women in the military shifted, and women were beginning to be constructed as unnecessary siphons of money that would be better directed in support of "real" soldiers.[26]

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[23] "Wasps May Oust 5,000 Instructors," *Washington Times Herald*, May 21,1944.

[24] "Male Fliers May Switch Tactics and Sponsor Their Own Bill," *Washington D.C. News*, May 9, 1944.

[25] Merryman, 69.

Merryman notes that multiple cultural forces, the male civilian pilots' lobby, the media, and Congress coalesced to challenge the WASP program and the idea of militarization for the group. She states, "A clear confrontation between the WASPs and cultural values in support of male dominance occurred when the positions occupied by the WASPs became desired by men."[27] This led to a hegemonic male reaction, which resulted in many male pilots protesting and forming political alliances in Washington D.C. against the WASPs. The male civilian pilots were resentful because they were being released from their domestic services and being drafted into infantry duty. Many men blamed the WASPs for capturing their position and creating hardships for several male pilots.[28]

Concerning militarization and why the WASPs was subsequently disbanded, Yellin argues that Arnold and Cochran had miscalculated the timing to ask for military benefits and more importantly the political maneuvering of the male civilian pilots. She said they did not allow for the stage that the war had reached. By the spring of 1944, Allied air superiority had been established in Europe, especially after brutal bombing campaigns using B-17s over Germany by the Eighty Air Force and other Allied bombing groups.[29] As a result, many of the combat veterans were returning from battle and the shortage of pilots on the home front was decreasing.

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[26] Rickman, 183-185.
[27] Merryman, 157.
[28] Ibid.

According to Yellin, the increase of pilots in the U.S. triggered a downsizing of male civilian pilots training programs, leaving 5,000 trainees out of work as pilots. Many of the out of work male pilots were afraid they would be drafted and so they decided to come together to protest the WASP program. I believe Yellin's research on this position is vital to understanding why the male civilian pilots turned on the female pilots in the WASP. It was this group of men that inundated Congress with a "virulent letter-writing campaign" that tipped the scale against the WASP program from gaining full military benefits.[30] They were the only voices of opposition to the WASP program gaining military benefits, until they went public to the media. It was this maneuver that gained the support of military male pilots. They were joined in their attack against the WASPs by military pilots who were returning from the various war theaters, who wanted to guarantee that they kept their flight pay.[31] "The men pilots were coming back from the various theaters of war and they found that we were flying the hottest and the heaviest and the fastest airplanes, which they thought were their private property, and they wanted their flight pay. And flight pay for flying those kinds of airplanes was a choice morsel. So they just lobbied against us," said WASP Madge Rutherford Minton.[32]

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[29] Yellin, 157-159.
[30] Ibid., 160.

The civilian male pilots formed a powerful lobby, supported by several civilian aviation organizations and veterans' associations. The lobby found an ally in the media, which was advocating an end to the war, a return to prewar standards, the reduction of military expenditures, a return of soldiers from overseas, and, significantly, a return of women from factories and the military to their homes.[33] The media ran a plethora of inaccurate stories that stemmed from the Ramspeck Report. The Report published many purported finding about the WASP program, which had considerable influence not only over how Congress voted on the WASP bill, but also on the anti-WASP media campaign.[34]

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[31] Merryman, 157-159.
[32] Minton, interview in "Women Who Fly".
[33] Douglas, 105-107.

The Ramspeck Report gave journalists more material for stories, and following the release of the report, the media campaign against the WASPs escalated dramatically. The report took figures about WASP pilot training out of context, without comparing them to figures for male trainees, and then developed negative conclusions about the statistics. For example, the report stated that only 80 percent of trainees completed the training program at a total cost per graduate of $12,150.70.[35] The report declined to provide comparative statistics for male graduates, which would have revealed that WASP candidates had a higher graduation rate than male pilots and were trained at approximately the same cost. The report also provided WASP casualty figures without comparing them to male casualty figures, claiming that such a comparison was not equitable because the training of the two was not identical.[36] The report then went on to make a supposition about the casualty rate: "It is authoritatively stated, and there is every reason to believe, that the induction of additional unskilled personnel into this program will accelerate the accident and fatality rate."[37] However, this contradicted AAF reports, which concluded that the WASPs had lower accident and fatality rates in training and on operational missions than did male pilots.[38]

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[34] Yellin, 161.

[35] *Interim Report No. 1600: Concerning Inquiries Made of Certain Proposals for the Expansion and Change in Civil Service Status of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots*, 78 Cong., 2nd sess., June 5, 1944. 8-13.

[36] Merryman, 172-174.

In a further allegation of the WASP program's failure to train its pilots effectively, the Ramspeck Report included a chart and descriptive copy that purported to show that WASPs could not successfully progress to higher pilot ratings. The chart showed that as of March 1944, only three out of 532 WASPs qualified on four-engine bombers, and only eleven qualified on twin-engine pursuit planes and bombers.[39] Again, while these figures are accurate, they leave out a great deal of information, such as the fact that the AAF had placed restrictions prohibiting WASPs from getting rated on four-engine bombers, and that the program for WASPs to transport pursuit planes had only started immediately before the statistics were gathered.[40] To back claims that a lack of transitional rating was the result of WASP inability, the report published hearsay: "A substantial number of candidates for the higher rating experience difficulties in making the transition, and officers in charge of WASP operations state that there is a lack of sufficient experience upon which to base an estimate of probable results."[41]

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[37] *Interim Report No. 1600: Concerning Inquiries Made of Certain Proposals for the Expansion and Change in Civil Service Status of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots*. 7.

[38] Douglas, 106-107.

[39] *Interim Report No. 1600: Concerning Inquiries Made of Certain Proposals for the Expansion and Change in Civil Service Status of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots*. 10.

[40] Merryman, 164.

The Ramspeck Report concluded by alleging that because women were getting preferential treatment, trained men were left with no jobs, and the WASPs were wasting millions of dollars raised from "the war stamps of school children, the taxes of the farmer, the savings of the wage earner, deductions from the pay envelope of the laborer, and the earnings of the industry."[42] The report alleged that the WASPs were destructive forces in the war effort. It also reflected public fears of a postwar United States suffering from economic problems escalated by women in the workplace when it stated:

> At the end of this war there will be tremendous surpluses of trained and experienced pilots throughout the world. Utilization of these surpluses will constitute an acute post-war problem. To now seek out and train, at Government expenses, additional

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[41] *Interim Report No. 1600: Concerning Inquiries Made of Certain Proposals for the Expansion and Change in Civil Service Status of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots*. 9.

[42] Ibid., 13.

> inexperienced personnel would add another surplus to this recognized post-war surplus.[43]

At the same time that the Ramspeck committee was publishing its findings, the House Committee on Appropriations addressed the WASP program and found very different results than the Ramspeck Report. This committee concluded:

> The members of the subcommittee having jurisdiction of the accompanying measure are a unit as to the genuine value of these women fliers to the war effort and agree with General Arnold that they should be given a military status and have the same responsibility as male pilots flying military airplanes, and, along with it, the same rights, privileges, and benefits to which such male pilots are entitled.[44]

The committee approved the requested amount of $6.4 million to fund the WASP program in 1945.[45] This compared with an allotted amount of $12.6 billion approved for the AAF and a total military appropriation of $49.1 billion for 1945.[46]

Unfortunately, the findings of the Committee on Appropriations would not receive media coverage nor was the full report introduced at the hearings on the bill to militarize the WASPs.[47] Yet the conclusions and figures from the Ramspeck Report were quoted in great detail by the media and also made their way into other governmental reports and congressional testimony, to the detriment of the WASP program. On June 16, 1944, one week before the WASP bill was to be voted on in Congress, Representative James Morrison of Louisiana voiced his opposition to the militarization of the WASPs an entered the entire Ramspeck Report into public record, urging all members of Congress to read it, claiming it was "concise, exact, and to the point."[48] The extensions of Morrison's remarks were listed under the heading "Ramspeck Committee Urges Army Air Forces to Utilize 10,000 Instructors and Trainees of WTS Program and Curtail Further Expansion of WASP Program."[49] On June 10, 1944, Representative Costello, author of the WASP bill, mentioned the errors and discrepancies in the Ramspeck Report.[50] His "Extension of Remarks" was listed under a simpler heading: "The WASP Bill."[51]

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[43] Ibid., 5.

[44] *Report No. 1606, Military Establishment Appropriation Bill*, June 7, 1944. 10.

[45] Ibid., 11-13.

[46] Ibid., 14.

In Costello's remarks, he focused on the Ramspeck Report's claim of a pilot surplus: "the most astounding part of this report is the assumption that there does exist a vast pool of well-trained pilots ready to serve the Army Air Forces at a moment’s notice. This is an error that I would like to correct right now.”[52] Costello provided documentation of the status and availability of male civilian pilots, and urged congressional support for the bill:

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[47] Merryman, 165.
[48] *Congressional Record - Appendix*, June 16, 1944. A3305.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Merryman, 165-167.
[51] *Congressional Record - Appendix*, June 10, 1944. A3171.

> We have placed General Arnold, with perfect confidence, at the head of the 16 air forces now functioning throughout the world. The records of these forces speak for themselves. General Arnold himself has requested the passage of the WASP bill in order that the civilian women pilots now serving with our air forces and those hereafter to be trained might be removed from their civilian status and placed in full military status. The desirability of this change cannot be questioned by anyone. Even the report of the Civil Service Committee urges in their second recommendation that “provision be made for hospitalization and insurance.” The effective utilization of these women pilots can only be accomplished if they are made a part of the military organization. Having seen the development of the WAC’s, WAVES, SPARS, and MARINES, I know no reason why

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[52] Ibid.

> this group of women pilots alone of the various military-service organizations should not be given the same status as had been accorded those other groups.
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> In conclusion, let me explain that the sole affect of the WASP bill is to bring these civilian women completely under military jurisdiction as they should be. Likewise, let me point out that the Army Air Forces have been more than pleased with the splendid success of the WASP program and its accomplishment, and this program shall be continued whether it remains in a civilian status or becomes a military organization. It will be continued because the Army leaders are satisfied as to the necessity for the organization and because it will aid materially in benefiting our aviation activities in this country and likewise relieving many pilots qualified for combat activities and enabling them to hasten our day of victory in this war.[53]

Costello’s remarks were no match for the cultural fears being raised in the media and among members of Congress. Morrison used newspaper opinion pieces and editorials to bolster opposition to the WASP bill. In all, he cited three op-ed pieces, one personal statement, and one letter in the weeks prior to the House’s vote on H.R. 4219.[54] Under the heading, “Bradley Taylor Explains in Detail the Whole WASP Situation – Says W.T.S. Men Got Raw Deal,” Morrison gave expert standing to a member of a special interest groups, entering into the record a letter written to him by Bradley Taylor, who represented a group advocating for the male civilian pilots. The letter filled two pages of the Congressional Record with hearsay and innuendo.[55] Morrison was not the only representative to quote opinion pieces instead of facts. After the initial vote on the WASP bill, Representative Edward Izac of California included a piece by gossip columnist Drew Pearson, who had issued a series of attacks against Cochran and the WASP program.[56] The heading for Izac’s remarks was taken directly from Pearson: “Arnold Faces Congressional Uproar Over His Continued Use of the WASPs – Miss Cochran’s Lady Fliers Now Replace Instead of Release Men.”[57] Morrison was, however, the most prolific in submitting materials against the WASPs.[58] Among these was an editorial piece published in the *Idaho Statesmen* on May 12, 1944. The editorial not only made unfounded allegations about the

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[53] Ibid., A3172.

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[54] Merryman, 168.
[55] *Congressional Record - Appendix*. A3342-3343.
[56] Yellin, 106-107.
[57] *Congressional Record - Appendix*, August 10, 1944. A3857.
[58] Yellin, 108.

WASP program and misquoted AAF statistics and requirements, but it offered a distinctly sexist shaping of all women. Because the allegations and tone of the article were echoed by members of Congress in the debate over the WASP resolution, the entirety of Morrison's quotation follows:

> Several times we have heard servicemen, usually back on furlough, complain about women in the service. Sometimes we felt that they were merely prejudiced, but sometimes it seemed to us that they had a valid gripe. A recent happening supports the latter position. Some weeks ago thousands of experienced male pilots were grounded, presumably because we had trained more pilots than we shall need. Nevertheless, Jacqueline Cochran's WASPs are getting a priority of a very special kind. There is a bill before Congress to commission women pilots, and some have already completed their first weeks of schooling. General Arnold told Congressmen that women pilots will be needed for combat. That's a strange statement to make when thousands of men pilots are now out of jobs, or soon will be. The men are angry about it, and they seem to have additional reasons. For instance, WASPs qualify for transport training after 35 hours of flying time, whereas men

> must have 1,000, including 200 heavy craft. We don't know what the explanation is. Probably it is the sentimental softness of American men in regard to their women. In colleges the smooth, good-looking gals can get A's without a lick of work; and in the armed services it may be that dimples have a devastating effect even on generals.

The rhetoric of this piece strongly implied that the WASPs had somehow, through sexual seduction, received undeserved privileges. In addition, by comparing these highly skilled pilots of military planes with college girls, the author even refused to characterize the WASPs as adults.[59]

Despite Costello's attempts at defining the bill and directing House debate to its particulars, members of Congress returned to the emotional topic of women taking over the roles of men. The atmosphere of the congressional hearing was rather circus-like, with members of the male civilian pilots' lobby cheering, booing, and making other outbursts.[60] The congressional vote seemed to be persuaded by the lobby efforts of the male pilots.

On June 22, 1944, House Resolution 4219 was defeated. The Army Air Forces had three choices they could make in regard to WASP militarization. First, it could push for passage of Senate Bill 1810, a WASP militarization bill that had been submitted to the Senate Military Affairs Committee and was awaiting debate. Second, the AAF could stop WASP training, in accordance with the recommendations of the Ramspeck committee, maintain the WASPs on active duty, and seek medical and insurance benefits for them. The third choice was to disband the entire program.[61]

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[59] Merryman, 169.
[60] Ibid., 170-171.

While the WASP bill was being debated before the House, Commanding General HAP Arnold was in Europe directing the air operations for the D-Day attack. The D-Day operations had been very successful. Allied troops landed in Normandy with fewer losses to the Air Forces than had been anticipated. The Allies were now moving toward Germany, and the American media was predicting a quick end to the war.[62] Upon his return to Washington, D.C., General Arnold ordered on June 26, 1944, that, in compliance with the recommendations of the Ramspeck committee report, the training program of the WASPs be discontinued as soon as those currently in classes finished.[63] Because of the time involved in training, this meant that the training of women pilots by the AAF would end in December 1944.

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[61] Yellin, 109.
[62] Merryman, 172-173.
[63] "Wasp Training Courses to End," *Associated Press*June 26, 1944.

The final WASP class graduated on December 7, 1944, exactly three years after the attack on Pearl Harbor. There were 1,074 women who graduated as a WASP and when the final class graduated there were still 916 on active duty.[64] The WASP program in total flew over sixty million miles in all types of weather and in every aircraft in the inventory of the Army Air Force. Every woman that participated in the military, from the WACs to the WAVES, was given military status, all but the WASP members. With the decision to retain the WASP program as a civilian corps, the female aviators lost military benefits which included military recognition, hospitalization benefits, insurance, and the education benefits of the G.I. Bill. Wise states,

> At a Hot Springs Arkansas, reunion in 1975, I learned of the campaign to again try to obtain legislation recognizing our service as military, under the guidance of Bruce Arnold (General Arnold’s son) and Senator Goldwater. I volunteered to work in the WASP Headquarters at the Army-Navy Club in Washington, D.C. and helped run the office, setting up a filing system and handling correspondence.[65]

Through Wise’s efforts along with many others, the United States Congress finally recognized the WASPs as a de facto military and granted Veteran status in 1977, although it could not undo over thirty years of missed opportunities.

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[64] Haynsworth and Tommey, 117.

[65] Interview with Wise

CHAPTER 10

MY RESEARCH/CONCLUSION

My research examines the story of female aviators who served their country at a time in history that forever changed the role of women in the workforce and more importantly in society. I investigate how gender and gender discrimination influenced and shaped the lives of many of these women. By utilizing a myriad of books, articles, the WASP archives, the archives of the US military, Congressional Records, and oral history interviews of female aviators, I hope I added to the scholarship and understanding of why the WASP program existed and why it was eliminated before the end of WWII. Wise was an amazing woman to interview and truly gave me a different perspective on utilizing oral histories to help tell the story of the WASPs. When I began this project, I theorized that most of these female aviators would willing tell their stories of bias and discrimination, however, what I learned through this process was that most of WASPs were truly happy and excited to have an opportunity to fly for the United States Military, in spite of the subjugation and discrimination.

The current scholarship on female aviators during World War II is deficient in providing a feminist standpoint. I set forth to demonstrate how gender as a social construct created an environment that was more conducive for discrimination and subjugation over time than what might appear to be the case for female pilots, thus changing the trajectory of the future successes for female pilots in the United States. I agree with Freedman's definition and goal of feminism,

> Feminism is a belief that women and men are inherently of equal worth. Because most societies privilege men as a group, in the U.S., social movements are necessary to achieve equality between women and men, with the understanding that gender always intersects with other social hierarchies.[1]

Further research might be productive in three major areas, one in discovering more stories and examples of discrimination through the writings of former WASPs. I am still amazed how so few women would call out the acts of discrimination they faced throughout their time as pilots in the military. The second major area is to try and declassify the reports completed by Jackie Cochran on the incidents at Camp Davis in North Carolina. She was a brave woman, but still felt pressured to not disclose what happened to those two pilots at the hands of the mechanics. I believe she gave us a major clue when she used the term "sticky throttle." The third area for further research surrounds the female pilot who crashed off the coast of Los Angeles and her body was never recovered. I am hopeful that political pressure will one day push the U.S. Government to put forth the money and effort to find her.

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[1] Freedman, 7.

As I complete this dissertation, the United States Pentagon is in the process of opening combat roles to women. I am not surprised, just disappointed that it has taken so long. As Lerner once said, "Women's History is a strategy necessary to enable us to see around the cultural blinders which have distorted our vision of the past to the extent of obliterating from view the past of half of humankind."[2] The work of feminist historians must continue as the stories of women deserve to be told and remembered. The world will continue to struggle around where women "fit" into their constructed roles, but I can only dream of a time when all of the world's societies are open-minded to all women and where gender and sex will no longer control or dictate opportunities afforded to women. I am inspired to think that there are other women researching the WASPs as well, and will continue to share these pilots' experiences with the world.

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[2] Lerner, 180.

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